METALSMITH

volume 18
number 5

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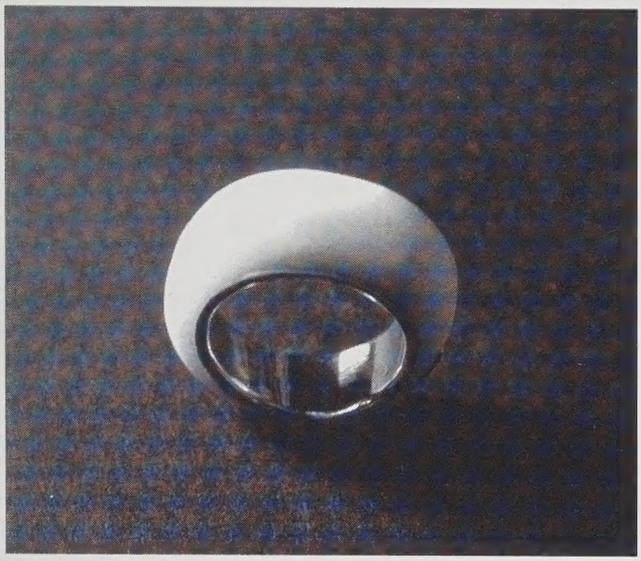

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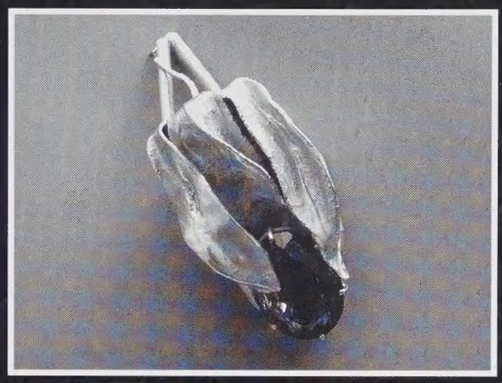

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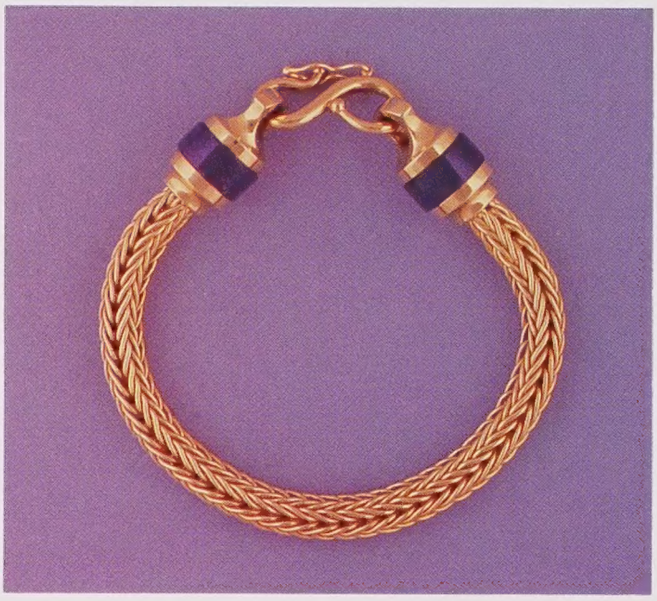

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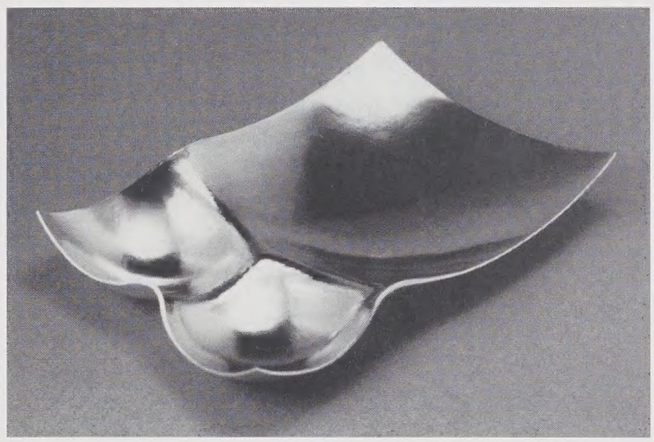

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cover
MARILYN DA SILVA
Harlequin Pair I, 1998
copper, brass, gold-plate, gesso, colored pencil, squares: 4 x 7 x 3", diamonds: $5\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 x 3"
Photograph by Don Felton

left
Harlequin Pair I (detail), 1998

below left
TOD PARDON
Tomarse La Libertad (detail), 1998
sterling, 14k, 22k, glass, bone, pigment, simulated ivory, peridot, hematite, pearls, 6 x 4"
Photograph by Joseph Levy

below right
CYRIL COLNIK
Corner Box (detail of gold-leafed, collared, scroll motif)
wrought iron, gold leaf
Photograph by the author

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FROM THE EDITOR

FRANK LEWIS

WE PROBABLY ALL ENCOUNTER WORKS AND OBJECTS OF CRAFT, WHICH ELICIT EITHER IMMEDIATE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE REACTIONS AND WHEN CALLED UPON BY COLLEAGUES TO EXPLAIN OUR RESPONSE WE ARE UNABLE TO ARTICULATE JUST WHAT IT IS THAT AFFECTS US. If forced to explain our feelings we could probably produce some half-baked argument based on history, influence, and/or level of craft. But frequently listeners are aware that our arguments are just words that hide the fact that we just can not say what it is about a particular object that moves us one way of the other. I guess that level of response to works of art is what we mean when we use the word *taste*.

Most of us are confident with our taste but when we ascribe the term to others it often involves suspicions of both arbitrariness and elitism. We may suspect that they exercise their taste as a form of judgement and posturing. Good taste is often a coded term for social and class distinctions. Even when respected critics such as Roger Fry and Clement Greenberg used the term it was loaded with a kind of high-brow superiority. Less secure critics often apologize for exercising their taste or introduce the term with a caveat that suggests that "this is simply an opinion that is not subject to critical scrutiny."

Though I am arrogant enough to be secure in my taste, I am often confronted with the fact that my taste and anyone else's is irrelevant when it comes to being a critic, art historian, and editor. This is not to say that likes and dislikes do not affect what I do. As a writer, for instance, I usually choose to write about works I enjoy. As an editor, on the other hand, I may choose to assign an article because the historical, theoretical, and even aesthetic qualities of the work demands that it be considered, despite my particular lack of attraction to it. Invariably I try to assign such a feature to a writer who is excited by the work and has an affinity for it. Such enthusiasm does not preclude criticality it simply helps to insure that any negative statements are considered and constructive.

I encourage writers to be particularly self-conscious about their taste. The pages of this magazine have a significant impact on the field of metals and it would be remiss of its contributors to not be vigilant concerning the degree of their influence. Yet at the same time, a certain degree of passion and advocacy keeps the process of writing about crafts from being sterile and pedantic. This is a delicate balance that most of us do not have to consider when walking through a craft-show with a friend, or purchasing a work in a shop. But I also think that readers should make similar demands on themselves. It is easy to flip through the magazine and use the images to help determine if an article is of interest. It also sometimes the case that after reading a paragraph or two one may decide that the article is not of interest. Yet such immediate judgements keep us from being challenged. Criticism should not be only the articulation of a particular writer's point of view, it should also encourage the reader to formulate and sometimes re-formulate their point of view. Some of the most effective writing on the crafts is not simply evangelical but rather intelligently and consciously opinionated and polemical.

I am not so naïve as to think that writing about crafts can change anyone's taste, but I do believe that in the time that I have been an editor my enforced consideration of things that initially created a negative reaction has paid off. I have looked a little harder and longer. I have learned things that my prejudices would have caused me to previously overlook. My tastes have not changed but my appreciation of various craftspeople and the objects they make has certainly expanded.

FCL

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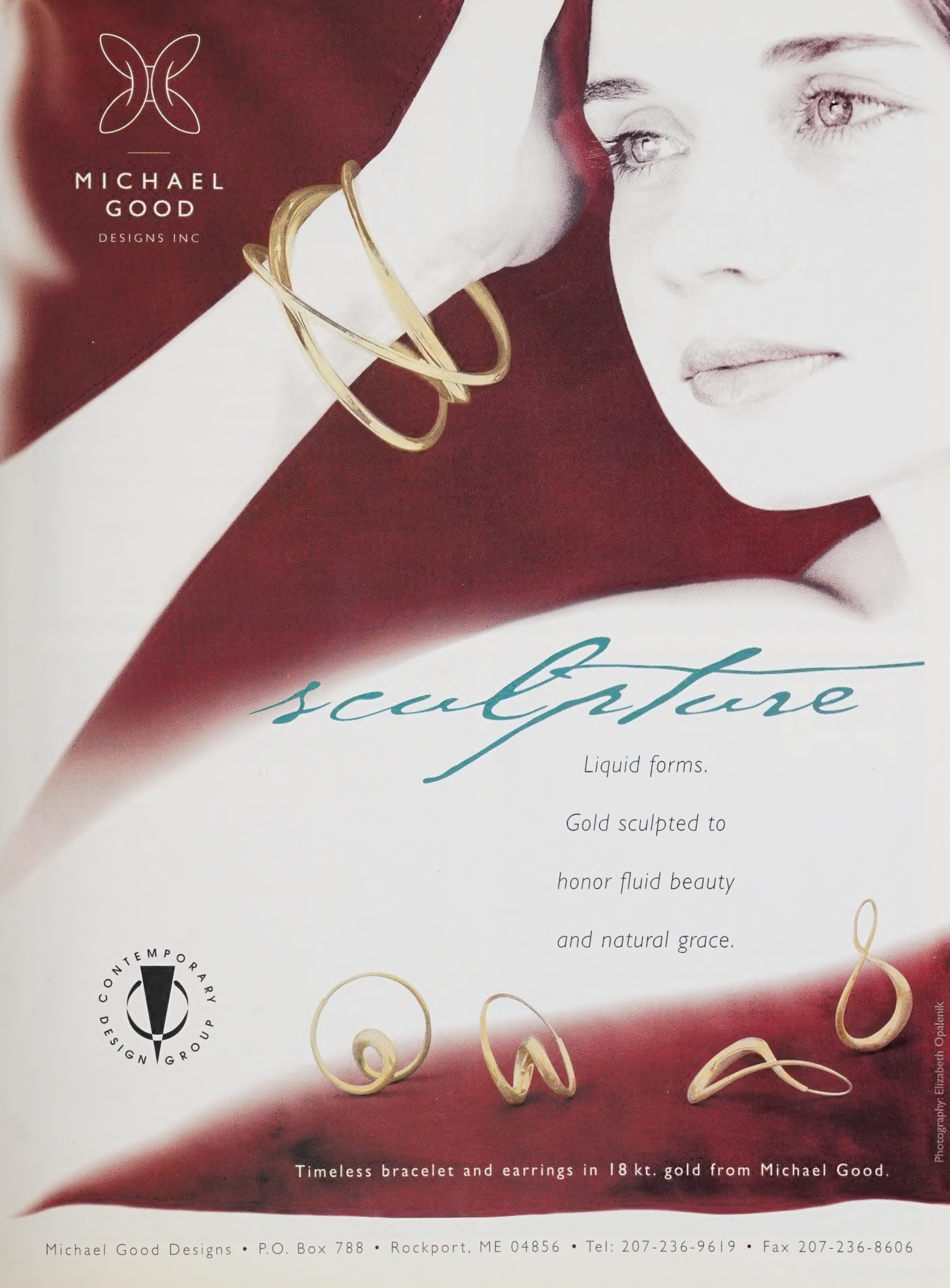

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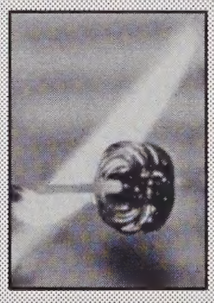

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RECENT SLIGHTINGS

TEXT JAMIE BENNETT

For any number of years now *Recent Sightings* has acted as one person's definition and clarification of our field's temperament. We now know who the jewelers' jewelers are, we are alerted to the problem of the virtual, and the predictability of certain procedures. We have been enlightened as to the value of our hands and corrected about what makes a "good" education. The Brucing of Metal has been going on for quite some time. *Recent Sightings,* by its editorial nature, is an opinion column. I am interested in the opinions of others, probably a bit more when they agree with me, but even when they might disagree. What I do object to, however, is being misrepresented and characterized as some sort of scheming craftland subversive.

It was very odd reading *Recent Sightings* (Spring 1998, Volume 18, Number 2) and seeing someone else tell people how to read and understand what I am saying in my lectures, teachings and writings. I felt as if I was being arranged like a bad musical in order to shore up someone else's authority and agenda. It is insulting to the artists I discuss, the readership, and me. This is particularly troublesome when we consider the author of *Recent Sightings* has held the position of a contributing editor to *Metalsmith* for over ten years, is a board member of SNAG and has been a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee to the magazine. That is a lot of power to protect; I wonder how SNAG or the author of *Recent Sightings* rationalize it?

I felt as if I was being arranged like a bad musical in order to shore up someone else's authority and agenda.

In this most recent sighting it is glaringly suggested that I am "...betraying one of the bedrock values of the craftworld, its loyalty to medium and process." This sensational characterization, which the author is often prone to do, is confounding. In what facet of my professional work am I betraying the "craftworld?" Whose "craftworld," the author's? What is a "craftworld?" That is what I would like to know and discuss. I am compelled, however, to respond simultaneously to this accusatory column.

Let's start with my own art work; I wonder if consideration of it entered into the charges of my medium/process "betrayal?" I question if it was looked at as evidence by our author. I work in a very traditional medium: enamel, along with gold, silver, and copper. The very essence of my work through the 'eighties and into the 'nineties was an exploration of the procedural nature of Enameling as a means of characterizing beauty. May I say I even developed some new procedures. I have always spent an inexcusable amount of time processing and thinking about processing! Material was not "...secondary to the idea," it was the idea. I would have to be self-effacing for this "betrayal" proclamation to be true. Be assured, among my assortment of faults, self-effacement is not one of them. There is no irony here. There does, however, seem to be either a failure on Metcalf's part to see my work as part of the *sighting* or a choice to pervert the fact that I have never abandoned, either in practice or in avocation, the necessity to evoke craft. With that said, it would be foolish on anyone's part to fail to recognize craft's changing role in our culture, whether we subscribe to a "craftworld" or not. Now, I may not be a "jeweler's jeweler," but I do make jewelry that participates as jewelry. It is not some unwearable spectacle, strategically made for cases in museums or self congratulations. I consider all the conditions of making Jewelry and take responsibility for what I make as jewelry. Process and medium are very included.

If it wasn't my jewelry, maybe it was my words, my words must have caused this *recent sighting.* While I did not, nor would I use the words *conceptual artist* in either the article or debate to describe the artists I addressed, our *Recent Sightings* author puts the suspect words in my mouth. Then he takes the liberty to define it for the sake of his "craftworld" agenda. Finally he uses

the words and definition to accuse me of promoting an anti-object, anti-making sentiment in favor of conceptual art. That's a bit sneaky, don't you think? Let's look over my article, for yet a fourth time. Let's pay particular attention to my closing statement. Someone must have missed that section, or perhaps dismissed it, because it didn't fit into the characterization which was being made of me. (And I am still trying to figure out what his deal is.) At any rate, let me reiterate from the article the value of rhetoric in making (how we make what we mean).

"I should suggest here I am not advocating the dogma of style, but a proactive attitude in making.... It is the idiosyncratic attention to the handling of the work, the very skin of the work, its discernible existence as a phenomena. We still make things and these exhibitions are a testament to the use and power of this marginal and outmoded activity" (*Metalsmith*, Winter 1998 Vol. 18 No. 1, p 33).

Now, I don't know how our author read that, but what I read is: Bennett absolutely cares about how things are made (craft) and what our objects look like (process/medium). If I am not being clear in my work or my words, let's talk pictures as well. I suggest we look again to the artists I discussed and used to illustrate the points from the lecture/article: Sondra Sherman, Kate Wagle, Susan Kingsley and his own Keith Lewis. All are makers engaged in ideas; there is not an object-hater in the bunch.

There are also muddling declarations about the work of my colleague, Myra Mimlitsch Gray: "craft comes first, and it limits the range of her ideas." His haughtiness, in presuming that either she, in her making, or I, in my observation, are unaware of the role craft plays in her work, and that his words are enlightening us, is arrogantly authoritative and condescending. Then he also confusingly declares that she is a conceptual artist and suggests she is "meeting my approval." First of all Myra Mimlitsch Gray does not follow anyone's "directive," and secondly, using her to get at me is a little tacky.

Why in the world would I discuss examples of makers such as Mimlitsch Gray if I did not see both art and craft as an integrated and mutually supportive activity, a making and thinking activity? I am not minimizing the significance of making or material, I take it as obvious and essential, but it is nonsense to suggest that if you are also interested in art issues you're committing some sort of craft sin. What Metcalf fails *to see* in his *Sightings* is that there are a number of ways to identify what we do as we engage our discipline as makers. I always thought of conceptualizing, like making, as an action. Yes, I like smart craft and smart Metal (I equally like a great looking object), and as an educator and artist I am more interested in Metal's affinity to Art than to Design. Therefore, my study leads in that direction. Craft, by the way, in its modern history, has always been defined in relationship to these two areas, not independent of them as he suggests or seems to want. I believe he possesses an MFA not an MFC. I am not "dragging" craft anywhere, it is already there. There is clear work in the field of Metal that is trained, considered, and strategized in relationship to the issues of design, and there is work that is more invested in the queries of art.

The very people that brought studio jewelry and Metal to us after World War II were trained either as designers (Hans Christensen) or as artists (Earl Pardon). I never found the work of Earl Pardon to be dangerous to the field of Metal, just because he considered himself an artist. In all the time he used the word artist and dealt with art issues such as abstraction and color fragmentation, he loved making jewelry and did some great work which benefits us all. As one becomes interested in not only what our work communicates but *how* (i.e. effectiveness), we will inevitably confront the relationship and difference our work has to either design or art.

Metcalf may demand a pure "craftworld," but even his own work has heavily borrowed from the strategies of representational artists and formal design investigations. All of our work consciously and unconsciously meanders in the overlapping zones and conditions of our upbringing. Art and design, needless to say, have done their fair share of dipping into craft vocabulary as well. Each of these connected realms offer peculiar and innately identifiable qualities, which distinguish their consequence and use. Doesn't our English language have concepts and words whose origin is foreign, but which provide enrichment and clarity? That is exactly why we intermingle. While I recognize and respect the importance and reference to our internal conditions, it is impossible for us to pretend a colloquial existence. I would suggest the avocation of a pure "craftworld" is a selfish and paranoid position, particularly if we are truly concerned about the future of this field and our students' well-being. It sounds a bit like *our purity is better than your contamination*. This attitude is ironically similar to the ideas of a pure art in High Modernism which I believe Metcalf has condemned on a number of occasions.

I would suggest the avocation of a pure "craftworld" is a selfish and paranoid position, particularly if we are truly concerned about the future of this field and our students well-being.

I see a primary part of Metal's uniqueness, that is, its contribution to an aesthetic world, in its history as an applied art and how that effects what we make. That is what distinguishes Metal in relationship to art, certainly more than process or medium. The stuff we make has a history of participation and use throughout cultures and times. That is big and can be profound. Using our use as a means of informing subject matter or as an idea about how we live with objects does not negate process or material. If anything it will make the use of those processes and

materials honest and powerful, less theatrical, distinguishing the beauty and practical significance of our objects. We are being told that it is material and process that defines us, but I interject that our relationship to use is significant, in practice and as content. The point being, when considering the defining points of Metal the applied history of our field is just as distinguishing a feature as is material and process. But unlike the portrayal in *Recent Sightings, I* do not argue that using one as a focal point negates or somehow betrays the other, or that thinking about it causes some sort of object blackout. If you are interested in thinking professionally about Metal you are not going to go wandering off making rhubarb pies or become a fireman. Quite frankly, the field of art jewelry is still young and I am not ready to close down fresh, responsible, and thoughtful areas of exploration just because it might undermine a particular writer's scholarship. If Metcalf was genuinely sincere about sustaining the survival of our discipline he might think of embracing what our field offers in content as well as methodologies.

Conceptualizing, having an idea about what you are doing, is a predicate to making - designers do it, poets do it, architects do it and, yes, even writers might be doing it. Why is Metcalf confusing conceptual art, that is, work that remains primarily a discourse of the mind, with physical, sensual, bodily things that present ideas about what they are? And why does he see one killing the other? Even conceptual work like Otto Kunzli's slide of a sheet of gold, not to mention the totality of his jewelry, adds to the discourse in the field. The author of *Recent Sightings* suggests that work like this is bad for the "'craftworld'" part of the field. Therefore I suggest we find another word if "'craftworld'" is so narrow and colloquial.

Conceptualizing, having an idea about what you are doing, is a predicate to making - designers do it, poets do it, architects do it and, yes, even writers might be doing it.

I believe I have made it clear that I neither see nor advocate content over object, nor do I dismiss history. The object is the very matter of content; it can celebrate, question, and proclaim the significance it possesses as a made thing. The object should be the visceral evidence of clear thinking. As to my rendering history "obsolete," I have no idea where that came from. My lecture/article was an historical observation, did I miss something? The very reason I was asked to present the lecture at Cranbrook to accompany the *Signals* and *Messengers* exhibitions was because of my regard for the historical events of this discipline.

This brings me to the SNAG debate, and the author's comment that my position in it renders the personal no longer a legitimate subject matter for jewelry. While for the sake of the debate I was more polemical then I probably would be in a dialogue on the subject, I did state again and again that the personal is inherent to works of art. Ideas are certainly drawn in part from what we experience. I do, however, find it difficult to support work that addresses and displays *private* meaning and beliefs and seems to disregard the conditions of being a piece of Jewelry. Otto Kunzli, I believe correctly, suggested to me after the debate (regarding autobiographical work) that it is like a Swiss army knife: it is trying to do a lot of things, but in the end does not do any very well.

One of my essential points was that works that picture the personal or are overtly private tend to be confusing as jewelry. My argument was not intellectual over emotional content, but content moderated by consideration of the object itself as part of a history of objects.

I am most disturbed by the condescending tone and by the obvious pre-writing, pre-thinking, and pre-judging of *Recent Sightings* before listening to the debate. I defended and argued for the *practice* of what we do, not just intent. Putting a pinback on an idea does not make it a piece of jewelry, regardless of the sincerity of the idea or the quality of the making. My argument was not one that any stock and trade conceptual artist would find fitting, it was an endorsement of the profoundness of jewelry and Metal as a signal of the physically eloquent.

Finally, in considering the personal, it was my first instinct to write Bruce Metcalf a letter directly, rather than agree to the editor's request for a column. I have on another occasion also been brought to task by Metcalf in his *Recent Sightings*. We had invited him as a guest lecturer to New Paltz, during which he had planned to do an article about my pedagogical position. At no time before, during or after did he speak to me regarding his intent. I was never questioned as to my educational objectives. I found his behavior then and now to be unprofessional and leaning toward personal attack. I do not mind a debate or working in a critical forum when there is a dialogue. Bruce Metcalf, however, over the years has worked hard at setting himself up as guru and sole authority to the field. I give him credit for his tenacity. But I believe as he looks omnipotently over his "craftworld" and sees or hears any dissimilar ideas of what Metal can be, he misuses the authority of his column to douse the fire. I can think of no other reason he would so mischaracterize my position continuously and present it so fearfully. Perhaps it is time we hear other people's "Sightings." I am usually for term appointments in politics as well.

Jamie Bennett is an artist living in Stone Ridge, New York. He is head of the Metal department at SUNY, New Paltz.

LETTERS

6/15/98

To the Editor:

I would like to address some concerns I have regarding Bruce Metcalf's column, "Recent Sightings," as printed in *Metalsmith*, Spring 1998, Volume 18, Number 2.

It is troubling to me that Metcalf could assume to know the content of a debate well enough to criticize it in writing, prior to its occurrence. How else could his views have been printed in *Metalsmith* and distributed, just one week after the SNAG conference during which the debate was held? This becomes much more obvious when the readers consider the fact that all the reviews in the Spring issue are of shows that occurred nine months to a year prior to magazine distribution - not exactly topical information. This should be a concern of the Editor and the advisory board.

Additionally, I wish to express my disdain, not so much for the content of "Recent Sightings," but for its style, as I often find Metcalf's arguments very compelling and relevant to the readership. What troubles me is the personal, anecdotal tone of his column, which I assume is a means of making the ideas more accessible. Our field is indeed small, and the fact that we continually write about each other is indicative of a larger problem that we have; that is, a tendency to make our discourse even smaller, and less significant, by personalizing it to colloquial and seemingly petty disagreement. Metcalf's writing is, in my opinion, sometimes compromised by an intermingling of the personal with the professional, which can undermine the meaningful substance of his general concerns. It would better serve the current readership and would help to expand the magazine's audience to talk more distinctly about ideas and less about specific incidents and people, especially if that focus seems motivated by issues beyond the content of the argument.

Finally, I have this point to make: I have seen Bruce Metcalf on various occasions solicit new writers to the magazine, in a generous bid to expand the discourse and inject new critical energy to the field. I strongly applaud his efforts in this regard. However, I wonder who would want to come forward with new ideas if they felt they may become the critical subject of his next "Recent Sightings."

Sincerely,
Myra Mimlitsch Gray

Editor's Note: At the 1998 SNAG Conference in Seattle I received the final production proofs before the Summer issue went to press only to discover that a file had been lost and that there was one blank page in the front of the magazine. Since Bruce Metcalf has been a reliable and seasoned contributor to the magazine I approached him about the possibility of his having a "Recent Sightings" on file. He volunteered to have a column on my desk within a week; therefore Mr. Metcalf's column was, in fact, written after his having attended the aforementioned debate.

FCL

7/15/98

Dear Editor,

In her letter to the editor in the Summer 1998 issue of *Metalsmith,* Barbara Seidenath regrets the fact that the 1998 *Exhibition in Print* was limited to SNAG members only. She goes on to say, "SNAG members can only profit from viewing a whole breadth of work made outside familiar circles," and "Growth of various kinds is based on openness and exposure, on inclusion not exclusion." I agree completely with these two statements but wondered why she did not apply the same rational to the 1996 *Exhibition in Print,* in which her work was featured. For instance, while reading the entry form for that publication, she surely must have noticed that artists residing outside of Canada, Mexico, or the US were not eligible for the 1996 issue of the *EiP.* This disqualification could potentially eliminate an even greater breadth of work than for the 1998 publication. The fact is, however, that SNAG hardly lacks breadth: currently, SNAG's membership of approximately 2,500 extends to 22 foreign countries outside of North America, and comprises a wide variety of artists and designers who would be eligible to submit an application. Another seeming exclusion to which Ms. Seidenath might have objected, in the 1996 *EiP,* was that of the work of artists featured in either the 1994 or 1995 *EiP.* This was intended to give *more* exposure to under-represented artists.

Up to this point, all of the juried *EiPs* have had different rules of eligibility, and by alternating between curated and juried formats, the possibility of showcasing a greater variety of artists and work is increased. When Ms. Seidenath tries to support her point of view by telling the readers of *Metalsmith* what SNAG members can profit from, while she does not care to join herself, the main focus of her regret becomes more apparent. Most professional societies that sponsor activities and services do require membership in order to participate. The entry fee for the juried *EiP* covers only a fraction of the cost necessary to produce it, with the necessary remaining funds taken from other parts of the SNAG budget. Some of the other meaningful activities and programs that SNAG sustains include an annual conference, exhibitions, student shows, educational endowments, audio-visual library, discount book service, *Metalsmith*, and *SNAG News.* Since Ms. Seidenath describes herself as an educator, it is remarkable that she would not find membership in SNAG: An Organization for Jewelers, Designers and Metalsmiths, a tremendous benefit both to herself and her students; and it is unfortunate that an educator would choose not to set an example of sharing and giving.

Membership in SNAG is open to anyone: it has no portfolio review, and no policy of hazing new members. SNAG has also provided innumerable opportunities for non-members over the years. In comparing the cost of SNAG membership and benefits received to those of other organizations of which I am a member, SNAG is easily the best bargain. The growth and success of SNAG and its programs have been made possible through our membership, and through many kinds of generous support from people who value its services, mission, and goals.

Sincerely,
Tom Muir

Hung Out to Dry I, 1997
copper, brass, sterling, gesso, colored pencil
$3\frac{1}{2} \times 7 \times 4\frac{1}{2}$"
Photograph by Philip Cohen

A View From My Garden:

"As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella"

text by Andy Cooperman "As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella." Writing in the 1870s under the pseudonym Comté de Lautréamont, the French poet Isidore Ducasse penned these words which became a standard born by André Breton and the Surrealists. Ducasse recognized the magic inherent in unexpected juxtaposition. He knew it was the nature of the human mind to question unanticipated associations and that those questions led the way to worlds unexplored. He understood the connection between art and the unconscious.

The Hollowware of Marilyn da Silva

Marilyn da Silva understands this connection too. Her world is one in which tea pours from pears and candles are snuffed with the skirt of a dress, where seemingly banal elements conjoin in carefully orchestrated meetings that by their very unlikelihood offer new opportunities for insight. She counts as inspirations the work of Giorgio DeChirico and René Magritte. Although admittedly a narrative artist da Silva is unlike so many who, in their frenzy to illustrate their story, abandon formal concerns and tacitly sacrifice the aesthetic for the economics of the narrative. Her pieces are, in the words of Kenneth Trapp, curator-in-charge of the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, "visceral and visually exciting." They are wholly satisfying in and of themselves without knowledge of the specific narrative involved. Insight into her personal narrative is gravy: the meal is made richer, but it was delicious before. Like a poet she is sure yet indirect. Careful to avoid the cute, she shuns the laugh track and trusts her audience to figure things out for themselves. Her aim is to generate "an ambiguity that is intriguing." Says de Silva, "It's really the world according to Marilyn."

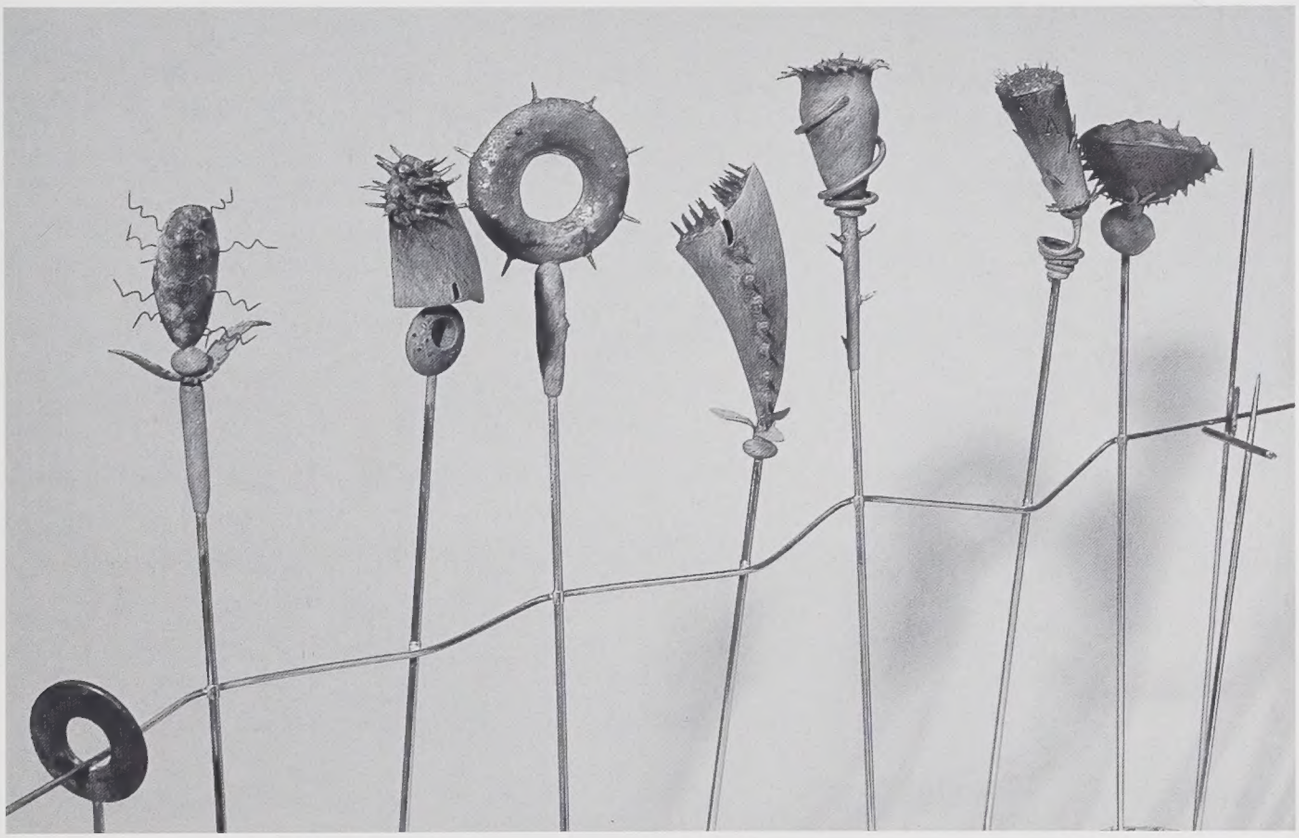
Raised in Akron, Ohio, da Silva remembers her home as a warm, safe place filled with people who really cared about each other. Her parents were very supportive and allowed each of the four sisters to find her own way. She remembers hours passed as a child drawing and watching as her father tinkered, repairing a toaster or constructing Christmas gifts for the family. (One year he built a Morse code telegraph key pad.) When she was ten or twelve years old da Silva received a small birthstone ring. It was very nice, but what really captured her attention was the velvet box that it came in. The way it closed, the hinge, the mystery of what it did or could contain intrigued her. "There's something mysterious about interiors," she says. Magic lay in the reality of volume without weight. On route to her high school home economics class she would pass the industrial arts classroom and cast a covetous eye at the machinery and shop tools. "I wanted to be in there making stuff with the cool drill presses and here I am baking cakes and making bad decoupage." Fueled by the prophecy of the ring box, da Silva struck out on her own and in art class intuitively sank, raised, and enameled a hollow copper sunflower while the other students were firing enamel on funky bits of copper scrap. "I just didn't know there were things that I couldn't do," she says.

The absurd juxtaposition of the woman's personas - refined, genteel Victorian lady and crass, slapstick, antisocial, line-jumping pin-pricker - left her in tears.

At Bowling Green State University in Ohio, da Silva's interest was split between art and education. "I knew that I was going to teach since I was in fourth grade," she maintains. Ultimately, she received a BS in Art Education. In pursuit of this degree she took several classes in metalsmithing, mostly casting and fabricating jewelry under the guidance of Chuck Evans and Hal Hasselschwert. Vessels were still calling, however, and in 1974 she moved to Bloomington, Indiana to enter the graduate program at Indiana University, headed by Alma Eikerman. One of the slated assignments, a bowl project, so intimidated da Silva that she nearly left town. She had had such little experience with the hammer: as an undergraduate she mostly carved, cast, sawed and filed. Nevertheless she prevailed, conquering the bowl and moving on to even greater challenges. "Alma (Eikerman) was a very important figure in my life. She not only taught me about metalsmithing, but how to look at things around me. We'd study architecture, other crafts, nature as sources for inspiration. She taught you how to make learning part of your life, to never stop exploring or being curious." In 1977 da Silva was awarded her MFA in Metalsmithing and Jewelry Design.

A glance at her resume since then is impressive. After teaching in a variety of situations, including an Artist in Residency at Kookman University in Seoul Korea, an Associate Professorship at Bowling Green State University, and Visiting Lecturer position at California College of Arts and Crafts, she was permanently hired as Professor and Program Head of the Jewelry and Metal Art Department at CCAC in 1987. It is a job that she loves, for she fervently believes in the power of education. Teaching on the college level with its attendant extracurricular responsibilities places huge demands on her time, but there are returns: "My students ground me and constantly remind me of the thrill of revelation and the frustration of trying to make things work." As she says, "Teaching keeps it fresh." Her program is highly regarded and the work of her students is innovative and well executed (as evidenced by the pieces displayed at the juried Student Exhibition at the 1998 SNAG conference).

The narrative style that is da Silva's hallmark evolved naturally along a timeline that had roots in formal soil. The *Above and Beyond* series, begun in 1988, were larger, monolithic vessels that at first stood as single objects. It was at this time that she began to use gesso to provide a surface



The devil's Garden (7 hatpins) 1991
copper, steel, lead, wood, colored pencil
each pin approx. 12 x 2 x 1"
Photography by Philip Cohen

on the form to which she could then apply colored pencil. Marks that she tooled into the wet gesso complimented the varied tones and pencil strokes which further enhanced the forms. All have scalloped forms or corrugated sections that arise from the main body topographically, as if pierced from it and then pushed straight out. It was very important to da Silva that these protruding areas be sealed so that no breach could be detected when the inside of the open vessel is examined. So these vessels were built with a double wall that hides any evidence of piercing and lends an air of mysterious provenance. As the series progressed, da Silva began to incorporate additional elements: the spiral, columns, small spheres. These elements became increasingly representational: a lifelike copper twig, a pair of fish. As these smaller elements took on more important roles the monolithic vessels became less central. Soon it was the arrangements of all these forms and their interaction, some even piercing the main vessels, that assumed center stage.

Despite the steady evolution in da Silva's work (there is, she says, "a logical progression from one piece to the next"), the leap to *Devils Garden* in 1991 is surprising. In scale, sensitivity and animation, this piece is light years from *Above and Beyond*. *Devil's Garden* began with an invitation to participate in *Arsenale: Aggression in Schmuck*, a traveling exhibition curated by the Museum fur Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt Germany. This exhibition explored the role of aggression in jewelry. After a conversation with a friend, telling stories and laughing, she left with a mental image of a scene they had conjured in which a genteel, Victorian woman uses the pin from her hat to prod her way through a long line of proper Victorian gentlemen. The absurd juxtaposition of the woman's personas - refined, genteel Victorian lady and crass, slapstick, anti-social, line-jumping pin-pricker - left her in tears. It also left her with an idea. What better way to approach the theme of aggression in jewelry than from the perspective of the passive aggressive? The hat pin as simple, functional ornament; the hat pin as tool, weapon, and even defender of virtue. It became the metaphor through which da Silva would explore the theme.

Careful to avoid the cute, she shuns the laugh track and trusts her audience to figure things out for themselves.

The seven large hat pins that she built were conceived to stand each on its own, yet function as a group when displayed. To this end she carved a base out of wood and covered it with lead sheet which she affixed to the wood with small nails. The pins stand in a line and are supported by a kinked wire trellis. Each pin averages about ten inches in height and all have laser straight pin-stems from the top end of which emerge the fruiting body of a plant form. These floral ends are each treated

Put out the Fire XXII, 1997
coppper, brass, sterling, gesso,
colored pencil
4 x 10 x $2\frac{3}{4}$"
Photography by Philip Cohen

differently but all carry warning signs which speak either loudly and physically - through ridges and crowns studded with spines and rusting tacks - or more subtly in the form of the swollen, over ripe calyx of a poppy. A snake spirals around that voluptuous pod ("Every Devil's garden needs a snake," says da Silva). There is an igloo shaped dwelling whose roof is crowned with thorns; a hollow, spiky edged torus perches atop its pinstem and serves as a shaman's rattle within which a small bead or seed clatters; the sepals of another spread back to offer the flattened, inverted cone of a pod that is studded with rusted, poisonous tacks, in possible indebtedness to the Surrealist Man Ray. In the natural world, they should have perished: victims of their own weight, balanced on improbably long, thin stems through which nourishment could not possibly travel. Yet they *do* seem alive, and the lead sheet at the base of each pinstem is marked by a red dot where the point pricks the ground and sustenance has welled up. Balanced precariously on their pinstems the pieces are gestural talismans that beckon the viewer near. But it is only when you get too close that they can hurt you. Pricked once one is cautious but keeps returning, called back by

Her iconography became established with the snake (insurance company), hats (home and friends), ladders, firehoses and an assortment of personal effects all making recurring appearances in varying supporting roles.

da Silva's precision, the level of her detail and the impeccable surfaces.

Da Silva considers this an important piece for her, one in which she took a lot of chances. Soldering carpet tacks to the pieces and allowing them to rust naturally was a leap of faith. Surfaces which before were carefully primed and fully covered with gesso she treated less reverently here and instead feathered the gesso and Prismacolor into the oxidized surface of the copper. Her palette, running toward the pastel in *Above And Beyond,* is more subdued and the effect is more sober and powerful. Displayed in Germany without their base (due to space constraints), the hatpins proved especially effective. Laid out on a cloth with their savagely sharp pins pointing towards the viewer they evoked surgical instruments arranged on a tray. The piece was later purchased by the Oakland Museum and displayed in the exhibition *Jewels and Gems: Collecting California Jewelry* in 1994.

During the construction of *Devil's Garden* another piece was taking shape in her mind. *Dwelling #1* is a terraced, classic castle form, a fairy tale at first glance. From the highest point long golden banners wave confidently. These animated pennants provide counterpoint to the pitted, stony surface which da Silva created by mixing sand with the gesso that covers the basic copper structure. Cowled windows, fashioned from square tube and tacks á là *Devil's Garden* stud the upper terraces. In the front a large threshold or draw bridge is open, bidding visitors welcome. In the rear another door provides egress. It is a piece that contrasts themes of change and stability, openness and defensiveness. The castle sits at a slight angle, jaunty almost to the point of cockiness. It is an optimistic piece. How awful the irony, then, to realize that within one year the da Silva's house along with nearly everything in it would burn and be declared a total loss.

The loss of their home struck at her very heart. "Home is a sanctuary," she offers when considering its importance in her life. Her response to the loss of this sanctuary was *Put Out The Fire*, a series of candle snuffers that she produces in groups. *Snuffers I, II, and III*, 1993 were built in sterling, and the bells of each offer a different representation of their home: the house on fire, the house after the fire (a wounded, two-inch version of *Dwelling I*), and the house of their dreams. As the snuffers grew in number they became allegorical, including a group that is based on Aesop's Fables and numbers *XI - XIV* which speak, via the imagery of rabbits, conical wizards' hats and carpenters' tools, about the magic it would take to complete the new house. Da Silva calls them "current-day fables with multiple choice morals." Those that followed became increasingly more subtle, subdued, and mature. It seems that as the fire itself became more distant, her memories of it grew sharper and her visual response to it more acute. As the initial shock faded the da Silvas discovered what would prove to be the true horror of their situation: settling the insurance claim. It is here that her work begins to grow in earnest. According to gallery owner Susan Cummins there was a leap in the development of da Silva's work from the initial show in 1994 - *Put out the Fire* - and her most recent in 1997. Not so much in the evolution of concept— the

Put Out the Fire XI-XIV, 1995
copper, sterling, brass, gesso, colored pencil
each approx. 3 x 2 1/2 x 7"

Put Out the Fire XIX-XX, 1996
copper, sterling, brass, gesso, colored pencil
each approx. 3 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 6"
Photography by Philip Cohen

An Unlikely Pear I, 1997
copper, gesso, colored pencil
each approx. $3\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 x 3"
Photography by Philip Cohen

An Unlikely Pear II, 1998
copper, gold-plate, colored pencil
each approx. $4\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 x 3"
Photography by Philip Cohen

work was still about the fire - but in the way she began to develop and use her imagery. There is a "sureness with which she put things together," says Cummins. Her iconography became established with the snake (insurance company), hats (home and friends), ladders, firehoses and an assortment of personal effects all making recurring appearances in varying supporting roles.

Working best under the threat of deadline, da Silva builds each element from sheet and wire stock. An inveterate fabricator, she is more likely to raise, forge or otherwise form something than she is to cast. Even within the province of fabrication she prefers the immediate method to the technically time intensive, eschewing jigs and power tools. "I'm more likely to grab a file than a flexible shaft," she says. In a field where obsessive tool *collecting* often eclipses tool *using*, this honest approach serves as a reminder of what's important: the making. To create the one-and-one-half-inch, three dimensional form of a raven for the candle snuffer *Put Out The Fire XXI*, she sank and raised the main body in two halves, hammering each independently rather than creating a masonite or Plexiglas die and dieforming those halves as others might have. This method, though not as likely to yield the perfectly matched seam inherent in die forming, comes naturally to her and, in fact, proves to be much more expedient than die forming, where you must take the time to first make the die before you even begin forming. "I draw with my hammer," she says, referring to the directness with which she approaches the metal. To be sure, she puts pencil to paper many times before starting a piece, but to work out details of gesture rather than those of technique. Halves soldered together, the raven - with wings, legs, and beak attached - is gessoed and then colored with Prismacolor. It perches atop the crown of a hat which forms the bell of the snuffer, about to pluck a bit of paper money from the hat band. This in turn rests on the forked end of a long twig, faithfully rendered in copper which serves as the handle to the piece. Though continuing the dialogue that passes through all of the *Put Out The Fire* series, this piece is the most graceful, confident, and poetic. Da Silva's iconography is more enigmatic than most, yet it is held together by a perfectly balanced arrangement of elements.

Functionality in an object is a foil around which da Silva wraps her imagery. *Put Out The Fire XXII*, the most improbable of the snuffers, puts the most distance between form and function. The unlikely balance of the bell - a large bucket containing a ship which heels over into a hammered sterling whirlpool - and the handle - the snake, here in the guise of a firehose - belies any idea of utility. The discovery of functionality becomes yet another layer to peel back. "The function is one of the metaphors," she says. "It puts an edge on things." With the snuffers, for instance, the line between function and content fades almost to transparency: the function *is* the content. This metaphoric thread is part of the fabric of da Silva's work, winding its way through objects both distantly and directly driven by the fire, including candle holders and a series of four candelabras, based on the traditional four armed design. Fabricated from copper plumbing hardware, *Hung Out To Dry* pokes fun at the perceived roles that objects assume. Between the arms of each piece runs a clothesline from which hang chairs, small sheets of sterling *paper*, a wire bird cage: items lost in the fire. Imagine a formally set table, uniformed servants attending guests in black tie, bathed in the light from these candelabras.

Functionality in an object is a foil around which da Silva wraps her imagery.

Now imagine them filling china teacups from a teapot shaped like an igloo whose lid is a golden pear corralled by a silver and copper barbed wire fence. This is *Dwelling III*, a teapot commissioned in 1995 for a couple who own a pear orchard in Eastern Washington state (one of the few commissions that da Silva has accepted). Small square widows in its side seem to open into its interior, but they are a tease. Whenever windows or openings appear in her work, as in *Above and Beyond*, da Silva takes pains to seal them from the inside with internal shells so that any illusions of depth or interior access remain undisturbed. The teapot remains water tight and enigmatically functional.

But the pear shaped teapots that followed *Dwelling III* are something else altogether. They are gestural, animated vessels that are extraordinarily beautiful and emblematic of friends and loved ones. Each is modeled from an actual pear to which da Silva refers as she works. Beginning with basic raising techniques she hammers the metal until the overall shape of the pear is blocked out. Then she flips the piece so that the lip or open end of the vessel becomes the bottom; the bottom (where the kernel was struck) is now the top and the lid is sawn free from here. This allows her to file what is now the base, or open end, of the vessel at a slant which cants the finished piece, giving each teapot its unique attitude. That these pieces work best when viewed together is no accident, and how they relate to each other is especially important when they are created in tandem.

An Unlikely Pair and *An Unlikely Pair II* are teapot couples, unlikely partners, different in shape, affect, and dress. The former are two rounded teapots, gessoed and Prismacolored: one purple and the other pear green. Stems sprout naturally from their lids, each with its attendant bit of twig and crenelated leaf. Da Silva considers these lids bonnets or chapeaux that accessorize each pear. The green pear wears its lid jauntily, leaning forward with its small leaf pointed up like a raised eyebrow, perhaps propositioning the purple pear whose larger leaves droop demurely. Maybe she is embarrassed by the tiny caterpillar which has chewed a half moon into one of them. Her handle coils shyly in response to his attention while his unrolls like a leer. You can almost see her scoot away. *An Unlikely Pear II*, 1998, could be an older married couple - he tall and balding, she smaller and rounder, comfortable in their hopelessly dated outfits. Accessorized with a dainty handle and clad in a polka dot dress her attire is as inappropriate on the bulging form of middle age as is his horizontal pinstripe. "We were taught rules of how to dress," says da Silva, "never to combine stripes and spots, et cetera." Though they clash horribly with each other, they've somehow made it work. Indeed, by the modes of contemporary fashion, they'd be considered hip. Da Silva's genuine affection for people shines through this work.

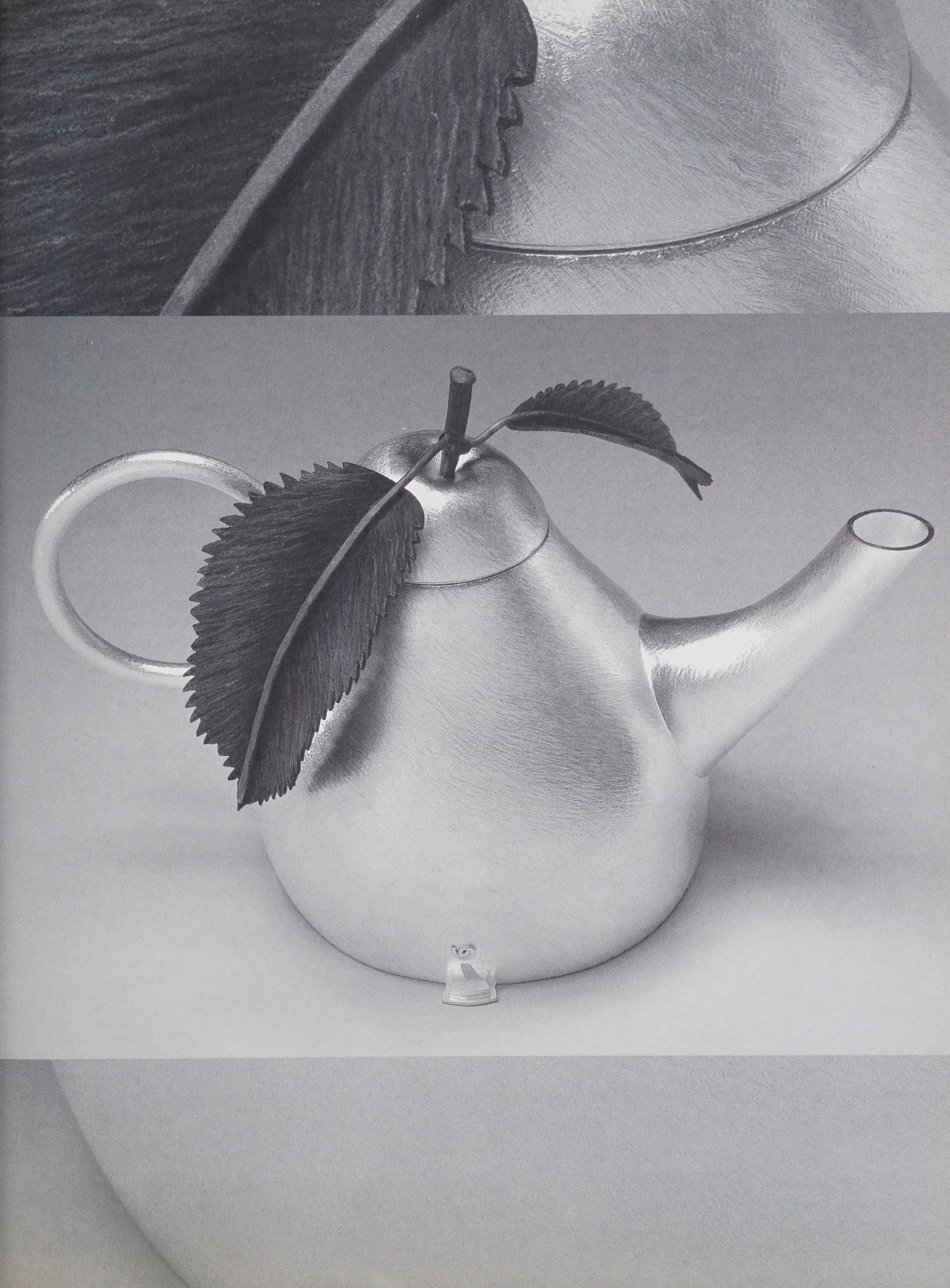
Everything comes together in the pears: technical virtuosity, mature aesthetic, restraint. But the *Silver Pear Teapot* and *The Golden Pair* really sing. These are truly sublime objects which seem to glow from within. Voluptuous and sensual, they are contemporary Venus figures, tailored to a modern aesthetic. After raising the former in silver and the latter in copper, da Silva saw-filed and then sand blasted the surfaces. In the case of *The Golden Pair* she flashed the copper with nickel followed by a heavier plating of 24k. The result is a surface that can only be described as *tasty*. There's a quality to it that is reminiscent of the best chocolate ever made; an *al dente* feel that is yielding yet resistant. Marks of lighter Prismacolor on the green ground of the leaves echo the file strokes on the teapot body. That soft metallic surface and the boldly drawn leaves which overarch it establish delicate synergy. Never wanting to stray far from home, da Silva furnishes each pear with a small doorway at its base (much refined from those previous), above which she places a delicate spiral of flattened wire: the da Silvan spin on the lucky horseshoe.

Trying to pin down just where the power of da Silva's work lies is a hard endeavor. Just when you think you've got hold of it, it slips to the side. You shake your head and narrow your eyes a bit, but you always return for another go at it because you know the payoff is there. "There is a consistency of approach that is always reliable," observes Kenneth Trapp. Her images are consistently rendered with an eye that neither photographs nor cartoons. Perhaps her strength rests in her uncanny ability to observe and comment without cynicism or undue sentimentality, as with *Tales of Hale-Bopp*. In a climate rife with off color humor and rolling eyed reportage, da Silva produced a piece that acknowledged those "Heaven's Gaters" who took their own lives and yet somehow avoided the pitfalls so obviously inherent in such an endeavor. To be sure, there is wit and certainly some anger in Marilyn da Silva's world, but it is always tempered with compassion and genuine affection. M

Andy Cooperman is a metalsmith who lives in Seattle, Washington.

Voluptuous and sensual, they are contemporary Venus figures, tailored to a modern aesthetic.

right
Silver Pear Teapot, 1996
sterling, copper, gesso, colored pencil
each approx. $4\frac{1}{2}$ x 6 x 3"
Photography by Philip Cohen

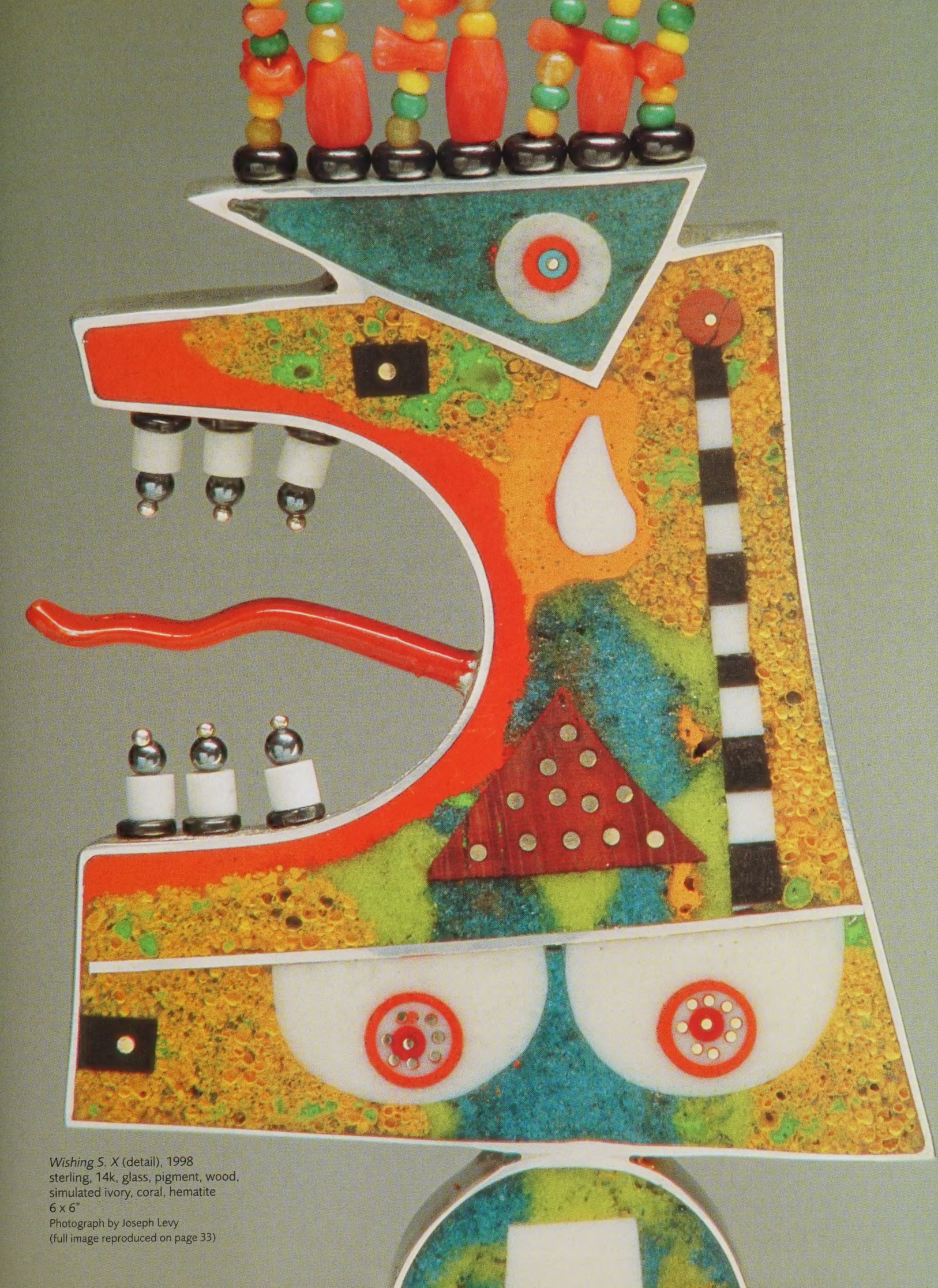


Between Expressionism and Adornment: The Jewelry of Tod Pardon

(Based on a series of conversations with Tod Pardon)

text by Robert Gilson

Tod Pardon grew up in an artistic household. The son of American jeweler Earl Pardon and fiber-artist Eunice Pardon, Tod was introduced to a rich creative environment at an early age. Although he was constantly exposed to artists and the creative process, Tod's parents did not encourage him to pursue a career in art. Instead, they urged him to develop his own interests and to explore his own particular talents. He tells a paradigmatic story, however, that indicates how his parents played a significant role in developing his powers of observation. One day during his childhood, Earl sent Tod out to clean the lawn without a rake. Instead, he was asked to pick up the leaves one at a time to examine their individual qualities. The young Pardon must have perceived this practice to be insufferable at the time. Yet in retrospect, the message - that direct observation of nature refines the senses - displays Earl's instincts as a great teacher laying important groundwork for his son.



Wishing S. X (detail), 1998
sterling, 14k, glass, pigment, wood, simulated ivory, coral, hematite
6 x 6"
Photograph by Joseph Levy
(full image reproduced on page 33)

Tod showed interest in art in high school and later decided to attend the State University of New York at Alfred as a ceramics major. Soon after arriving at Alfred, he learned that he would not have an opportunity to work with clay during his freshman year. He enrolled in the school's newly designed Foundations Program. After experimenting with a wide variety of materials and processes, he decided to study painting. The decision proved to be propitious.

Tod entered college in 1970, a time when many academics were declaring that painting was dead (while somehow missing the irony that they themselves were still teaching painting). It was at the height of the Vietnam war, campuses were being torn apart with protests, and many students, appalled by the American government's perceived lack of morality, were using art as a vehicle to express their feelings of disenfranchisement. Pardon was told that it didn't matter which medium he worked with - the goal was simply to work - and that in time the message would become apparent. Tod felt frustrated by his early efforts with painting, because he spent too much time trying to convey his message while focusing too little attention on the medium itself. But by the end of college, Pardon had committed himself to painting as his primary mode of expression.

After completing his undergraduate degree at Alfred, Tod attended graduate school at Syracuse University where he concentrated his efforts on stain painting. Helen Frankenthaler laid the groundwork for this approach to painting in the late 1950s. The process involved covering the floor with plastic, then laying the canvas on top. Paint was poured through the canvas and, once it was absorbed, the canvas was flipped to stain the other side. The resulting images consisted of a series of random marks and amorphous forms interacting within a field of saturated color. Tod acknowledges Frankenthaler, as well as Wassily Kandinsky and Arshile Gorky, as important influences during his graduate study.

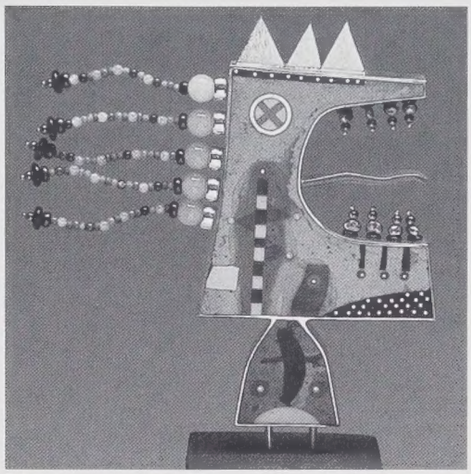
As Tod's involvement with painting deepened, he decided not to pursue a teaching career. He resolved instead to devote his full energies to making art. He moved back to Saratoga Springs after graduate school and began doing architectural restoration as a means of earning a living.

Gradually, Tod's efforts moved away from stain painting. One day he walked into his studio and discovered that a painting on paper he had placed behind glass and hung on the wall had fallen on the floor. The paper had been cut into the exact shapes of the broken shards of glass and the still tacky paint adhered the paper to the glass. This proved to be an unexpected and happy accident. Pardon left everything untouched on the floor and came back to look at it again and again over the next several hours. When he cleaned up the mess, he kept some of the fragments to look at as new paintings. In the process of salvaging some of the pieces, he made an intellectual shift which would help to redefine his approach to painting.

In graduate school, Tod was taught to think of the canvas as a field in which an event might occur. By saving fragments of the larger work, the painting became an object in and of itself. The field was transformed and the edge of the work, as well as the perceived event, now assumed a central role in the viewer's experience. He began experimenting with this format while exploring the relationships between real and illusory depth. He started working with mixed media (craypas, paint, foil, and paper maché) on foamcore and paper. This method of working freed him from some of the formal constraints he had experienced in graduate school, while allowing him to develop a new art-making vocabulary for himself.

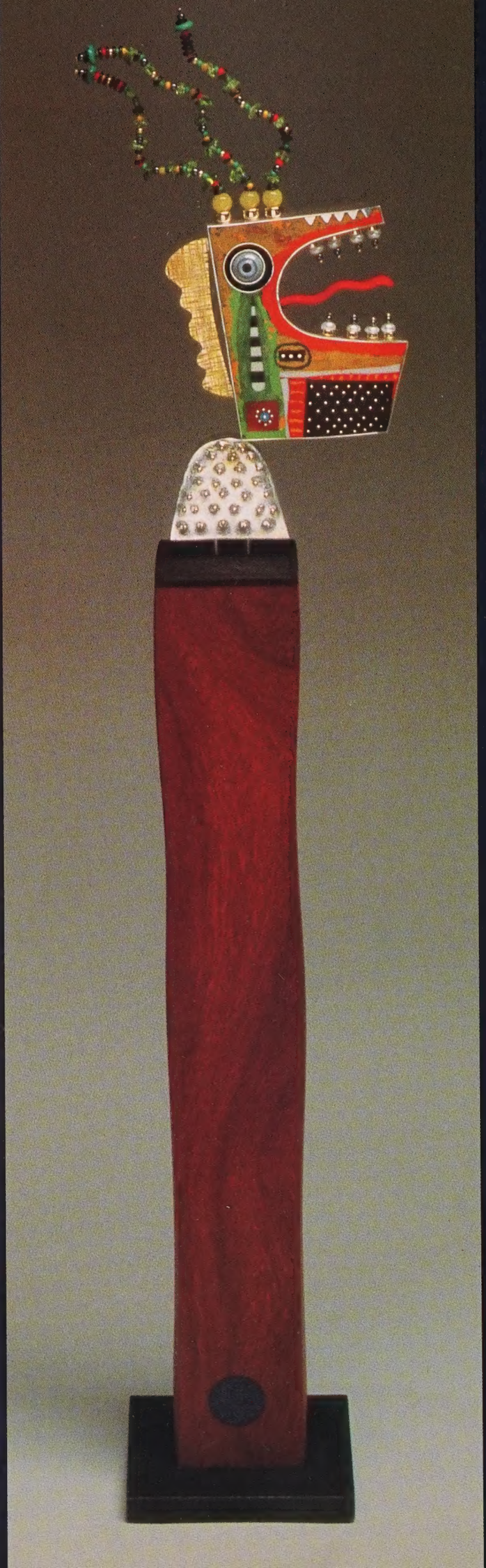
Tod's previous paintings had been quite large scale. By shifting his attention to fragments of the larger piece, Tod also became interested in working on a more intimate scale. He became intrigued with the notion of portability and went as far as making a set of backstraps for one of his pieces so that he could carry it around.

When his father saw this work, he suggested that Tod might consider enameling as a more satisfactory medium for what he was trying to express. Tod took his father's advice and started experimenting with enamel jewelry in collaboration with his wife Jackie. He began working with small simple shapes in which the enamel's qualities of perceived dimensionality and randomness allowed him to continue the inquiry he had begun with his new paintings. Enameling proved to be the perfect vehicle for Tod to make the transition from the conceptual constraints of painting to jewelry and the issues of adornment. By greatly reducing the scale from the paintings to the enamels, he also began to more clearly articulate his interest in the relationship of the field to the object.



Self Portrait with Tongue of S., 1998
sterling, 14k, 22k, wood, glass, pigment, simulated ivory, amber, hematite, pearls
Photograph by Joseph Levy

Enameling proved to be the perfect vehicle for Tod to make the transition from the conceptual constraints of painting to jewelry and the issues of adornment.



Tomarse La Libertad, 1998
sterling, 14k, 22k, glass, bone, pigment, simulated ivory, peridot, hematite, pearls, 6 x 4"
Photograph by Joseph Levy

II

Formally trained as a painter, Tod's father, Earl Pardon, made his first jewelry in 1948. He began teaching at Skidmore College in 1951, and in 1954 he took a year's leave of absence to work as the Assistant Director of Design at Towle Silversmiths. During his tenure at Towle Silversmiths, he was asked to design two presentation pieces which were given by the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Unit of Boston to Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Sir Winston Churchill. Upon returning to Skidmore in 1955, Earl resumed what was to become a distinguished career of designing and exhibiting jewelry that lasted until his death in 1991. His work is represented in many major public and private collections, including: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Boston Museum of Fine Art, The Smithsonian Institution, The American Craft Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

What differentiated Earl Pardon's jewelry from that of many of his peers was its depth and seriousness of purpose. Earl's willingness to experiment with a wide variety of materials, combined with his extraordinary technical virtuosity, allowed him to create works of stunning beauty and complexity. He was a brilliant colorist who used gold, silver, ivory, exotic hardwoods, pearls, enamels, precious and semi-precious stones, and anything else available to supplement the richness of his palette. He approached the process of jewelry-making not only as a designer and a craftsman, but also as an artist who revolutionized the concepts of adornment to embrace the formalist substance of painting and sculpture.

In 1987, Tod began working for his father part time, and two years later when Earl retired from Skidmore College, Tod became Earl's full-time assistant. Tod's first experience working for his father was to fire all his enamel chips. Then Earl taught Tod how to solder and to make hinges for his bracelets. In time, Tod's role expanded to constructing most of Earl's jewelry. Earl retained full control of the design and color selection for the work, but by the end of the second year, Tod also began putting together some of the color schemes.

The experience of apprenticing with Earl provided Tod with an opportunity to master a wide variety of jewelry and metalsmithing techniques which he gradually began to integrate into his own work. In addition to the vast storehouse of technical information he was able to absorb, Tod also learned first hand about how Earl combined materials to develop the richness and complexity of his palette. Tod incorporated all that he learned from his father into his own jewelry, and while this quickly established him as one of the most technically proficient jewelers of his generation, it also branded him as little more than a copycat of his father's work.

If there has been one consistent criticism leveled at Tod Pardon's jewelry, it is that it is too referential to his father's. There is certainly validity to this criticism when one looks at Tod's early work: he was clearly influenced by a very strong teacher. It took the painful reality of Earl's death in 1991 to jar Tod into reassessing the nature of what he was striving to accomplish.

III

Earl Pardon's passing was a tremendous shock to Tod. He had worked with his father on a daily basis for the previous four years, and the bond between them was deep and complicated. Earl developed a very active exhibition schedule during the last years of his life, and he produced a staggering amount of work. After Earl's death Tod and his mother assumed the role of accounting for all of his jewelry that was on loan at various galleries, cataloging and documenting the work, and fulfilling the last of Earl's professional obligations.

Six months later, Tod found himself depressed, exhausted and wanting a break. Ettagale Blauer had organized a trip to Kenya for jewelers and Tod decided to go. It was a trip that changed the course of his work. Standing on the Massai Mara and hearing no sound except the wind released him from the events of the previous months, while clearing and rejuvenating his mind and spirit.

When Tod returned to Saratoga, he began a new series of brooches that employed the vast technical vocabulary he learned from his father, but with an iconography of his own invention. The work is clearly figurative and references, in part, things Tod saw on his trip to Africa (most notably the leg-wrappings of the Massai warriors). But other references come from things much closer to home. As a boy growing up in Saratoga Springs, Tod was fascinated by a group of pre-Colombian Colima figures his parents had collected on a trip to Mexico. They were displayed in a cabinet in the living room along with various other small objects the Pardons had acquired over the years. These Colima figures were displayed on small pedestals and, in spite of their diminutive size, exuded a sense of power

and mystery. Returning from Africa, Tod began developing a body of work which simultaneously referred to the Colima figures in his parents' home, Cycladic art, Modernist art and design from the 1950s, as well as personal and more universal references.

Pardon begins constructing these brooches from the legs up. The legs, which help to define the character of the figure, are often Mokume-gane. The body is hand-fabricated out of sterling silver and 14k and 22k gold. Pardon has developed his own inlay material comprised of pigmented glass in a cold-setting binder which allows him to form it beside wood, bone and other materials in a dimensional form. Beads and precious and semi-precious stones are used in a variety of ways to finish the piece. Upon completion, a pedestal is fabricated for each brooch.

Traditionally, jewelry is seen primarily for its capacity to adorn the body, while its sculptural qualities are often overlooked. Tod has designed his brooches to be worn, but by fabricating pedestals for them, he has called attention away from the wearer to the work. The pedestal allows the brooches to be viewed as sculpture, thereby shifting the context of their objecthood. This shift is important, because by isolating the work from its decorative references, and by emphasizing the object itself, the pieces become free from the standard concepts of adornment. Detached from the body, Tod's jewelry assumes its own identity. What one sees are complex visual objects which address issues of color, form, value, texture, metaphor, narration, et cetera. And in spite of the relatively small scale, the work possesses a monumental quality. Like the pre-Colombian figures from his parents' collection, Tod's brooches engage the viewer on a subtle and intimate level, while emanating a sense of power traditionally associated with larger objects.

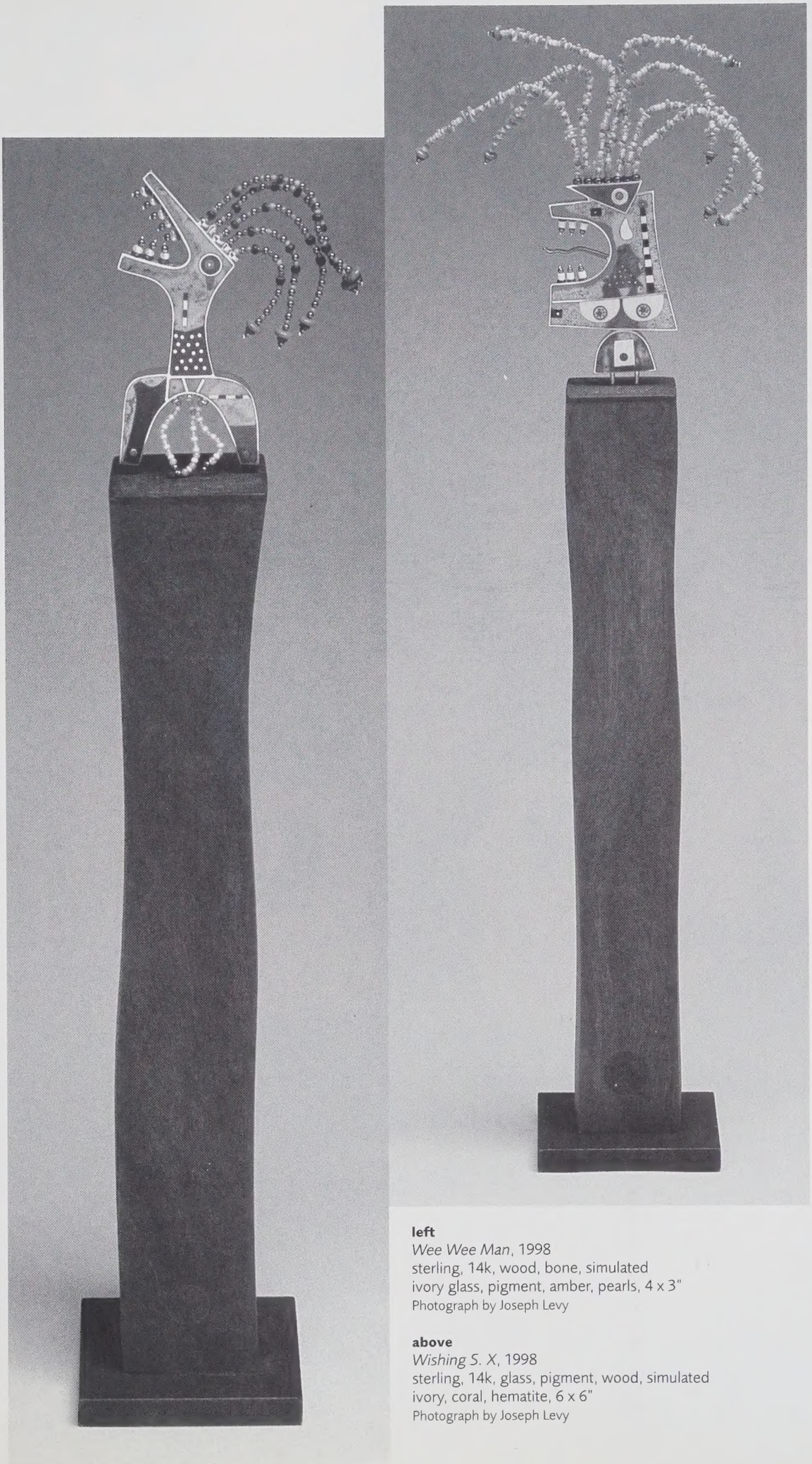
Tod followed his first figurative brooches with a series he calls *Left Handed Amazons*. The title refers not only to the Greek myth, but to an incident reported by the Pissaro brothers while searching Brazil for the Lost City of Gold. According to one of the Pissaro brother's account, while traveling on a great river the expedition encountered a race of tall, light-skinned, warrior women armed with bows. As Pissaro's men approached, the women shot arrows at them which fell well short of their mark. The women were signaling that they desired mates, but the gesture was misunderstood. In the ensuing battle, dozens of Spaniards were said to have been killed. The women were never seen again, but the river still bears their name. In the Greek myth, Amazon women each amputated one of their breasts to facilitate drawing their bows. Resplendent with beaded head dresses and naked chests, Pardon's *Left Handed Amazons* possess a totemic quality which pays homage to the mythic power and beauty of the Amazons, while symbolizing the grace and dignity he perceives in contemporary women.

Pardon has entitled his latest body of work the *Silent Scream* series. Initially inspired by his mother's passing and by the adoption of his new son Dexter Guy Pardon, and later by memories of traveling in Mexico and Kenya, the series addresses the universal question of what it is like to cry out and not be heard. Pardon insists the work is not political and calls attention to the humorous quality that many of the pieces possess. One piece called *The Wee-Wee Man* clearly refers to Pardon's new son Dex and the father's interest in his son's bodily functions - the maker's son making, if you will. Pardon has also shifted the mirror to himself by integrating a number of self-portraits into the series. In *Self-Portrait with the Tongue of S*, Pardon depicts himself with a colleague's tongue. The head, with random patterns of yellow, blue, and green pigment, is crowned with three 22k triangles and hair made of glass and semi-precious beads. A large red tongue in the gaping mouth is at once defiant and self-mocking.

Pardon's new brooches are larger in scale and begin to challenge the limits of adornment. The increased size has freed him to take a more painterly approach to working with materials and refers directly to the methods he used in his early stain paintings. Pardon is adding larger areas of pigment to each piece, then grinding it away to create the precise image for which he is striving. This subtractive technique has allowed him to carve into the material and to gain more control of the color. He is able to depict body parts accurately, but he also strives to achieve a measure of randomness in the process. Whereas Pardon's earlier pieces possess an effigial quality, his new method of working has allowed him to become more specifically referential with his images.

In his new work, Tod Pardon has combined the technical legacy of his father's jewelry with his own formalist training as a painter. By designing work which is wearable, and which also functions independently as small sculpture, Pardon, like his father, has attempted to extend the parameters of jewelry as an expressive medium. The work speaks eloquently for itself. M

Robert Gilson is the Director of The School of the Arts at the 92nd Street Y in New York City.



left
Wee Wee Man, 1998
sterling, 14k, wood, bone, simulated ivory glass, pigment, amber, pearls, 4 x 3"
Photograph by Joseph Levy

above
Wishing S. X, 1998
sterling, 14k, glass, pigment, wood, simulated ivory, coral, hematite, 6 x 6"
Photograph by Joseph Levy

Cyril Colnik *kunstschlosser*

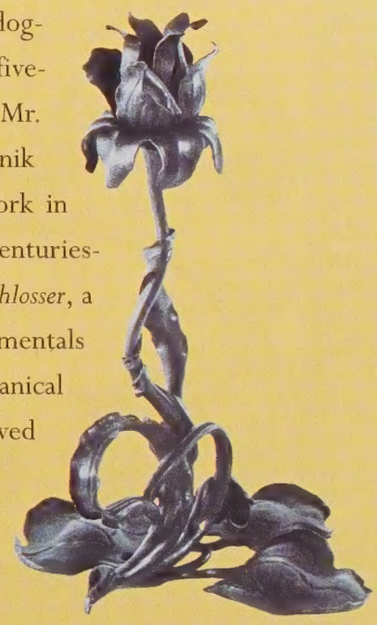
text by Virginia Jones Maher

Acclaimed the Tiffany of wrought iron artisans by fellow blacksmiths, Cyril Colnik (1871-1958) was an internationally recognized master of the art of hand-forging rugged and inflexible iron into items of the utmost beauty and delicacy.[1] Trained as a blacksmith, Colnik was, essentially, a sculptor who combined fire and force to shape his stubborn and gritty medium into illusions of fragility and refinement. Although best known for functional architectural ornamentation - fences, gates, railings, and doors - Colnik also created exquisite decorative accessories and objets d'art. As a designer and craftsman, Colnik remains one of the most respected ironworkers of the twentieth century. Firmly rooted in the European guild tradition, the Austrian-born Colnik acquired an early appreciation of classical forms and techniques. Yet, when faced with emerging modernist concerns at the turn of the twentieth century, he fashioned a distinctive, independent style, synthesizing the motifs of the past with contemporary art styles of the day.

Colnik's career in metalsmithing began when he went to a forge near his family's estate in Trebien, Austria, to acquire nails for a dog-house he was building. A blacksmith at the forge taught the five-year old how to make the nails himself and "from that time on Mr. Colnik wanted to do iron work."[2] In the mid-1880s Colnik apprenticed as a mechanical assistant and student of ironwork in Vienna. At the time, European guilds adhered to a rigorous, centuries-old tradition. It took four years or longer to become a *kunstschlosser*, a blacksmith artisan. First, in Vienna, Colnik learned the fundamentals of forging during the daytime, and studied drawing, mechanical design, and the great masters in the evenings. Then, Colnik served a four-year apprenticeship in an art metal shop in Graz, Austria, under the instruction of Franz Roth. Next, Colnik became a journeyman, honing both his technical abilities and

left
Wrought Iron Gate (detail: Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, Milwaukee)
Photograph by Virginia Jones Maher

right
Candle Holder, c. 1900
wrought iron
Photograph by John Cumming
Courtesy of The Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Foundation.



artistic style, as he traveled from shop to shop on foot, learning from master ironworkers in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Germany. During this walking tour of Europe, Colnik was exposed to a full range of ironwork styles from simple and sturdy medieval country house hardware, to grand Renaissance and Baroque carvings and grillwork. Colnik completed his training at an industrial arts school in Munich where he again studied drawing, design, and modeling, and worked in all phases of metal work.

Colnik's mature ironwork, reflecting his comprehensive guild-dictated education, displays a variety of artistic styles and motifs. Early in his training, Colnik incorporated the curled and veined leaves, cartouches, S-scrolls, rosettes, and diagonal trellis straps of German Rococo into his repertoire. During his formative years in Vienna and Graz, Colnik was introduced to Beaux-Arts, the then-fashionable conservative style inspired by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century classical architecture. In the early 1890s, Colnik was exposed to Art Nouveau, a style which advocated the use of iron framework, supports, and ornamental ironwork for the richness and integrity it adds to architecture.

Throughout his almost seventy-year career, Colnik implemented the proper balancing and harmony of classical forms he learned from Beaux-Arts, as well as the slender proportions and swirling, curving lines characteristic of Art Nouveau.

Colnik arrived in the United States in 1892, when he was sent to install a German ironwork exhibit at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Reminiscing years later about the impressive wrought iron frieze he exhibited at the World's Fair, Colnik said, "I won what was to have been the Gold Medal, but those were depression days in 1893 and the Fair lost money, went bankrupt. I got a blue ribbon instead."[3] Colnik's award-winning *Masterpiece*, a $48\frac{1}{2}$ x $35\frac{1}{4}$ inch hand-worked iron panel requiring two years to complete, is a sampler demonstrating iron working techniques and forms. Composed in a spiral motif, *Masterpiece* is a swirl of lush, intertwining acanthus leaves, tendrils, and flowers encircling a grimacing central figure representing Vulcan, the ancient Roman god of fire and patron of metalworkers. Colnik's juxtaposition of graceful foliated motifs with the grotesque focal point evokes a sense of mystery and ambiguity in this wrought and cast panel of exceptionally vigorous, tactile forms.

left
Masterpiece, c. 1891-92
wrought iron, 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{4}$"
Photograph by John Cumming
Courtesy of The Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Foundation.

An award-winning frieze exhibited at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition, Masterpiece is a sampler of techniques, demonstrating Colnik's mastery of the wrought iron medium and techniques.

After the Columbian Exposition Colnik remained in the U.S., establishing a shop in Milwaukee where he worked until his retirement in 1955. Local lore has it that Colnik was influenced to move to Milwaukee by beer baron Captain Frederick Pabst, an exhibitor and sponsor of an authentic nineteenth-century beer garden and pavilion at the Columbian Exposition. At the time, Milwaukee had a large German community and was a center of German art and culture. It was an opportune place and time for Colnik to set up his ornamental metals shop: "America was in a financial collapse, yet Milwaukee was prospering, a city that needed craftsmen and mechanics. Many Milwaukee families (such as the Pabsts...) liked to display their newly-acquired wealth by decorating their homes with ornate wrought iron work, such as was seen on the homes of wealthy Europeans."[4] Prosperous Milwaukee industrialists and businessmen were commissioning the finest private homes and public buildings. The talented, European-trained Colnik appealed to these tradition-minded German-Americans. In a few short years he had established a thriving ornamental metal goods business. For more than sixty years in his adopted city, Cyril Colnik produced iron, brass and bronze ornamentation of exceptional artistic quality for public buildings, including Milwaukee's City Hall; for private homes of prominent business and industrial leaders; and for the Ringling mansion in Sarasota, Florida, and the Insul and Ryerson homes in Chicago.[5]

When Colnik arrived in the U.S. in the early 1890s, cast architectural ornament was commonplace. As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, blacksmithing was becoming a lost art form. It was customary then, as it is today, to refer to all decorative ironwork as wrought iron.[6] But, wrought iron forms only a small proportion of the decorative ornamental iron produced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More common was iron which was cast in moulds and not worked beyond the point of being poured. Cast iron results in precisely uniform shapes, suggesting that the metal has been made on a production line. Cast iron contains impurities (carbon) which make it brittle and cause it to liquefy when heated, so it can be poured into molds. Pig or cast iron has three to four percent carbon.[7] Like glass, it starts out as a liquid, is then poured into molds, and, when cooled, it cannot be reheated or shaped by hand. Castings may imitate wrought iron, but in general cast iron is used for heavier, more sculptural forms which, for the most part, are not as easily made in wrought iron.

Iron for blacksmithing, on the other hand, requires a high

degree of purification of the raw material by smelting and refining to remove impurities, producing a metal which is about 98.855 percent pure with approximately .04 percent carbon.[8] Wrought iron is fibrous in structure, light gray in color, and workable in both its natural state or when heated. The more wrought iron is worked, the denser and harder it becomes. It can be returned to its original state by reheating and then slow cooling. Wrought iron is malleable when hot and may be bent, twisted, or hammered into desired shapes and sizes. Cold pieces may be fastened together with rivets, bolts, or bands called ferrules. A heavy coat of linseed or other oil is usually used to protect the finished product. It is burned into the pores of the iron with heat, wiped off, smoothed with an emery cloth, and then finished with a combination of beeswax and boiled linseed oil.

By definition, wrought iron is hand worked on the anvil by hammering while it is hot, cooling, and sometimes cold. It has a richer texture than cast iron and more uneven surfaces, displaying the characteristic marks of the hammer and attesting to the human touch. Iron worked by hand requires exacting conditions - the iron must be heated until it turns bright red, roughly 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. At too high a temperature, the metal will burn beyond use; at too low, it will splinter when subjected to the blows of the hammer. Because heat dissipates quickly when metal is removed from the fire and transferred to the anvil, the blacksmith must work quickly, swinging his hammer repeatedly, preferably once a second, to flatten and shape a rod, or pound it against a tool to force the rod to curl upon itself, forming a scroll. The blacksmith is only able to work for short periods before it becomes necessary to reheat the iron.

Drawings are a necessary ingredient in wrought iron production. Exact, full-size sketches of the piece to be made, with all details included, are essential for both the creative and mechanical aspects of the work. The main tools of the trade are the anvil and a selection of hammers including: cross peen, straight peen, ballpeen, and sledge hammers for heavy work such as welding, straightening, and cutting off. Various other tools are used to produce a wide range of three-dimensional motifs. Tongs are used for gripping different shaped iron bars. A fuller - a blunt-edged tool - increases length, or make grooves and depressions. The swage block - a heavy block of iron with grooves or perforations - shapes metal by hammering against it. Flatters are used to flatten the surface of the iron. A heading tool shapes the shoulders on tenons, makes boltheads, and is used in flower work. A hardie cuts iron by holding the iron against the edge of the hardie and then striking it with the hammer directly above so as to form an indentation on both sides. The piece of iron is then bent back and forth over the edge of the anvil until it breaks. Chisels of all sizes are used in conjunction with the hardie. Scroll forks and starters facilitate the forming of scrolls, one of the most popular motifs since the beginning of forging.[9]

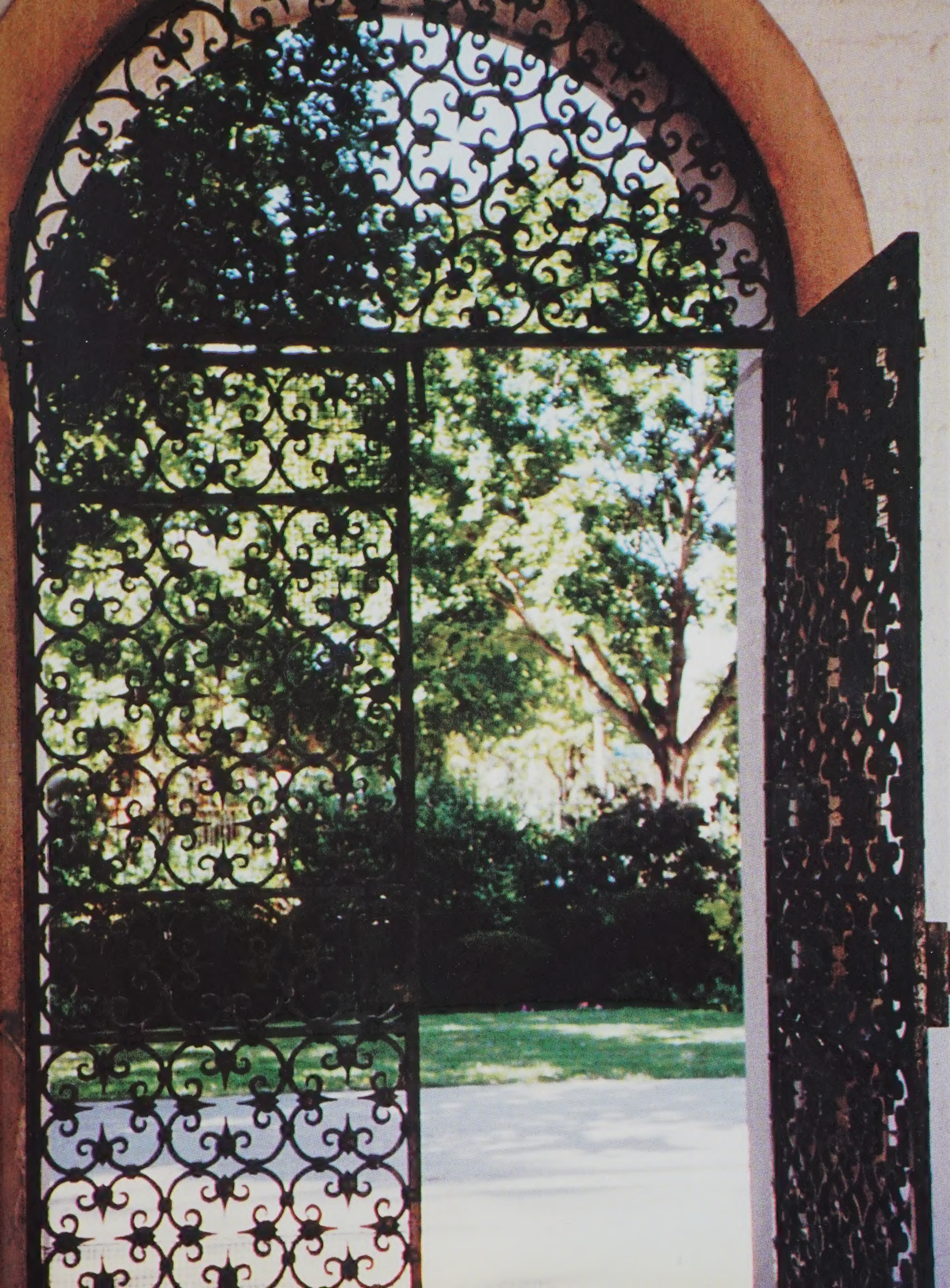
Like centuries of artisans before him, Colnik made scrolls by beating the end of a bar into the shape of the inner part of the scroll, hooking it into the end of the scroll starter's inner twist and then hammering the bar around the outside curve of the tool. Twisting is another centuries-old simple technique, done by heating an iron bar, clamping it in a vise, and twisting. The rod is kept straight by cooling it with water applied from a bottle. An interesting variation is produced when the edge of a square bar is hammered while hot. The opposite edge is equally flattened by the anvil. When the bar is twisted, it gives the effect of a bar with an intricate section.

Colnik also worked in repoussé, a technique in which thin sheets of iron are pounded out, first from the rear and then on the front, resulting in an embossed design. The only work known to be signed by Colnik is a hand-hammered escutcheon which was "executed on a bed of pitch with tallow added to allow give to the bed, pounded out from the back and the front to form the design in bas relief...[and] signed in the lower right-hand corner."[10]

Surface ornament - small flowers, rosettes, or leaves - was added to pieces by incising or stamping a matrix of hardened steel into which nearly white-hot iron was hammered, forming the desired shapes. When individual components of a larger piece were completed, Colnik joined them together using one of three methods: welding, collaring, or threading one bar through another. Welding, a method of attaching iron to maintain uninterrupted strength, is done by heating two parts and then simply hand hammering them together. Collaring is a

above
Art Nouveau Epergne, c. 1895-1900
wrought iron
Photograph by John Cumming
Courtesy of The Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Foundation.

right
Wrought Iron Gate (Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, Milwaukee)
Photograph by Virginia Jones Maher



process of wrapping a thin piece of hot iron around two parts to be joined, forming a small "collar" and pounding down the overlapping end. Threading consists of heating one bar, placing it on the anvil, punching a hole in it with a chisel, and then threading another bar through the hole. In the cooling process the hole will shrink, locking the two bars together.

When Colnik began his career in Milwaukee in the mid 1890s, the Beaux Art style was the preferred fashion, providing an atmosphere of grandeur in the interiors of department stores, hotels, municipal buildings, and private homes. Soon afterward, at the turn of the century, the Arts and Crafts movement diverted attention away from grandiose and ornate styles, favoring instead functional, structural, handcrafted designs reminiscent of a simpler, pre-industrial time and place. Focusing attention on craftsmanship, honesty, and the artistry possible in the design and production of utilitarian household objects, the Arts and Crafts movement provided the impetus for a revival of blacksmithing and hand-wrought iron products from 1890 to 1920. During the heyday of the Arts and Crafts style, Colnik produced enormous handcrafted strap hinges and other hardware for doors and furniture, as well as the mainstay of his business - simple, sturdy iron fences and gates.

Colnik's work is full of familiar motifs and designs which can be traced back to the medieval beginnings of blacksmithing. As a designer and craftsman, Colnik remains one of the most respected ironworkers of the twentieth century. Reflecting a vigorous imagination and keen artistic sense, his intertwining naturalistic forms seem to grow organically one out of another. Scrolls often terminate in imaginative animal heads or open-mouthed dragons which are made by splitting an iron bar and then forming the head. Especially noteworthy are his crisp curled and veined leaves, and the "Colnik trademarks: small rose buds, blooming roses and branches with bark design."[11]

Colnik fashioned a distinctive, independent iron working style, synthesizing motifs of the past with contemporary art movements of the day. The classical design associated with Beaux-Arts and German Rococo were the underpinnings of his artistic style. Turn-of-the-century sources of inspiration proved to be the heart of his artistic philosophy. Colnik's restrained, delicate, highly vertical forms, mirroring the designs of the Vienna Secessionists of his Austrian homeland, were richly embellished with Art Nouveau-influenced organic motifs - the leaves, vines, tendrils and flowers associated with Louis Sullivan and the Prairie School of his adopted American Midwest.

Credit is due Colnik for introducing a fine standard of iron artistry which will endure for generations to come in Wisconsin and the Midwest. Hundreds of examples of Colnik's architectural work can be viewed throughout the Milwaukee area. The Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, a repository of the extensive wrought iron collection from Colnik's estate, includes his award winning Masterpiece from the 1893 Columbian Exhibition, along with the classically-inspired repoussé escutcheon and cast galvano planter, assorted Art Nouveau-influenced floral candle holders, and a charming, foliated, cattail-motif epergne, and numerous other decorative iron accessories hand wrought by Cyril Colnik. M

Virginia Jones Maher, M.A. Art History, 1994 University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, is a writer, lecturer and exhibition curator. She is the author of *The Spirit of the Times: American Arts and Crafts Furniture* and numerous articles and papers on American art and architecture.

notes

[1] Colnik is listed in the *American Art Annual*, 1932 and *Who's Who in American Art, 1940*, and was widely reported to be a gold medal winner at the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

[2] "Cyril Colnik Dead at 87," *The Milwaukee Journal*, October 26, 1958.

[3] "Colnik's Unique Altar Cross Unveiled at ULCA Meeting," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, October, 1950.

[4] Colnik was employed to produce iron work at the Pabst home between 1895 and 1900.

[5] Colnik's Ornamental Iron Shop is listed in a 1903 Milwaukee City Directory as "Manufacturers of high grade artistic gas and electric chandeliers, candelabras, lanterns, brackets, old fashioned door fixtures, fire place antique armors, hammered shields, memorial tablets, statuaries, monuments, etc."

[6] "Since the middle of the nineteenth century the general public was scarcely of wrought iron...it was regarded as existing but not really counting...thought to be of unfashionable origin...bronze was the fashion of the day when there was money to spend. When there was not, cast iron was the apologetic substitute." Gerald K. Geerlings, *Wrought Iron in Architecture*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929, p. 5.

[7] E. Graeme Robertson and Joan Robertson, *Cast Iron Decoration: A World Survey*. New York: Whitney Library of Design, Watson-Guptill Publications, 1977, p. 12.

[8] According to Geerlings, the best raw materials come from the bottom of shallow Swedish lakes where four inches is deposited in approximately 15 to 30 years. In Swedish production smelting and refining are combined in one step with the use of charcoal. Geerlings, p. 10.

[9] John Seymour Lindsay D.C.M., F.S.A., *An Anatomy of English Wrought Iron*. London: Alec Tiranti, 1964, pp. 5-8.

[10] Judith A. Simonsen, "Cyril Colnik." *LORE*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Milwaukee Public Museum, 1981.

[11] Ibid.

left
Gate (detail displaying three methods of connecting wrought iron forms: welding, threading and collaring pieces together)
Photograph by John Cumming
Courtesy of The Francis Whitaker Blacksmith Foundation.

OBSERVATIONS

Valeri Timofeev

The tendency in the last 100 years or so has been for artists to seek the new, the radical, and the cutting edge in terms of both design and processes. Even many traditional craft artists seek the unique, fearing accusations of borrowing or copying.

Valeri Timofeev has the confidence to look to tradition and still find his own way. Practicing a plique-a-jour technique of enameling which looks impossible in its complexity, Timofeev eschews modernist restraint for a complexity of color and design that surprises and awes. Reminiscent of the brilliant colors of his native Russia, from brightly painted folk decorations, to the jewel-like brilliance of orthodox icons, to the spectral carnival of Faberge, Timofeev's chalices and goblets transcend both past and present. Their craft, design, and color impress even the most committed modernist.

left
Vine Set, Twins #4, 1997
18k, diamonds, plique-a-jour, aluminum
8 x 6 x 6"

above left
Plate, Two Spirals, 1996
24k plated silver, plique-a-jour enamel
$11/2 \times 71/2 \times 71/2$"

above
Bowl, Aquarium #4, 1995
24k plated silver, plique-a-jour enamel, pearls
$31/4 \times 37/8 \times 37/8$"

below left
Vase, 1994
24k plated silver, plique-a-jour enamel
$73/4 \times 33/4 \times 33/4$"

below
Goblet, 1995
24k plated silver, plique-a-jour enamel, pearls, cloisonne enamel
$51/2 \times 31/2 \times 31/2$"

opposite page
Bowl, Aquarium #4, 1995
detail

REVIEWS

Adornment for Performance: Jewelry for the Opera

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, California
September 2 - October 4, 1997

by Robin Updike

San Franciscans have always been mad about opera. For decades the city has supported its beloved San Francisco Opera, helping it become one of the most artistically acclaimed opera companies in the nation. So when the opera celebrated its move back to the newly-remodeled, beaux arts Opera House in the fall, opera lovers throughout the nation anticipated the gala opening season with unfettered excitement.

Susan Cummins, founder of the Susan Cummins Gallery in nearby Mill Valley, is also an opera fan. And as one of the best-known and most risk-taking jewelry dealers in the country, she decided to organize a show that would not only pay homage to the San Francisco Opera but might also push some of her jewelry artists into new directions that reflected both their own aesthetics and themes related to opera.

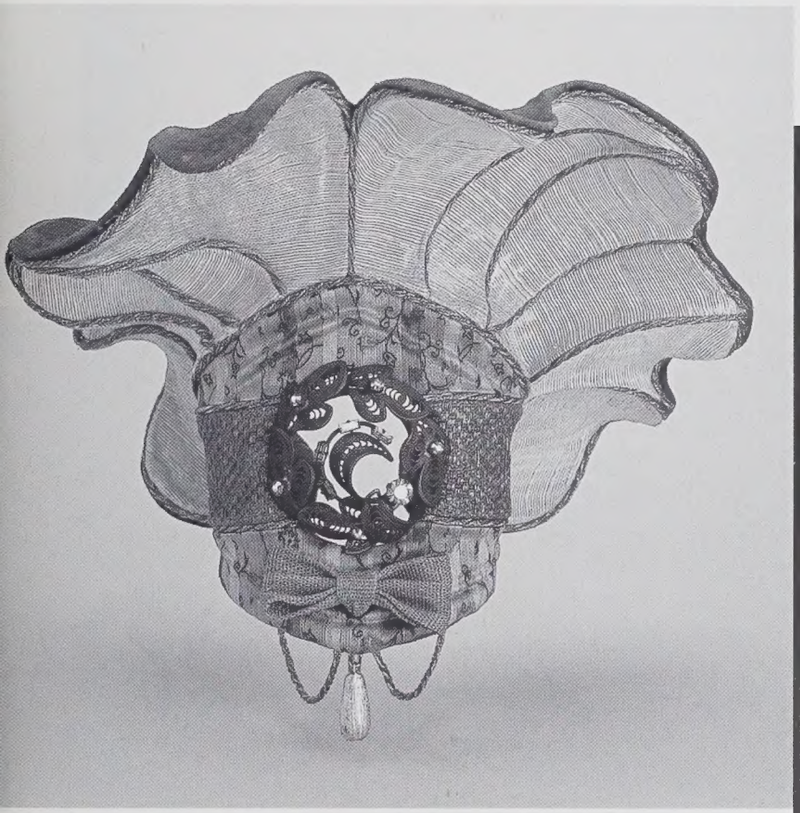
She gave her assignment to twenty-six artists who agreed to participate, asking them to make pieces that referred to specific operas, specific musical scores, or well-known singers; or they could make jewelry that would be appropriate to wear to the opera. In a society in which the wearing of extravagant or attention-getting jewelry is rare, Cummins hoped her assignment might inspire some dramatic, ingenious, and unapologetically lavish designs.

The result was a clever, often delightful show, and the most satisfying pieces tended to be by artists who chose to make narrative, quite specific pieces.

Keith Lewis's silver, copper, and enamel brooch was a witty yet tender tribute to the glamour and melodrama of opera. Lewis took his inspiration from an imaginary libretto about moths drawn toward open flames. Though there isn't an actual opera on that particular theme, the idea of innocents drawn toward tragedy is common in opera, and a satirist could easily come up with an opera parody based on moths and flickering candle light. In Lewis's beautifully crafted brooch a heavy, green enameled curtain is drawn aside to reveal an old-fashioned candelabra, flames flickering with a green-and-white moth hovering dangerously close.

Robin Kranitzky and Kim Overstreet made a narrative wood, copper, brass, acrylic, and found-object brooch on the opera *Pelleas et Melisande*. In their representation of the opera's tragic young lovers, Melisande, the doomed heroine, stares into a pond where the crown representing her dead lover glistens among the rocks. Though slightly bulky as a result of the artists' attention to lots of detail, the 4 x $2^{3}/_{4}$ x $1^{1}/_{4}$" brooch is nevertheless a visual delight.

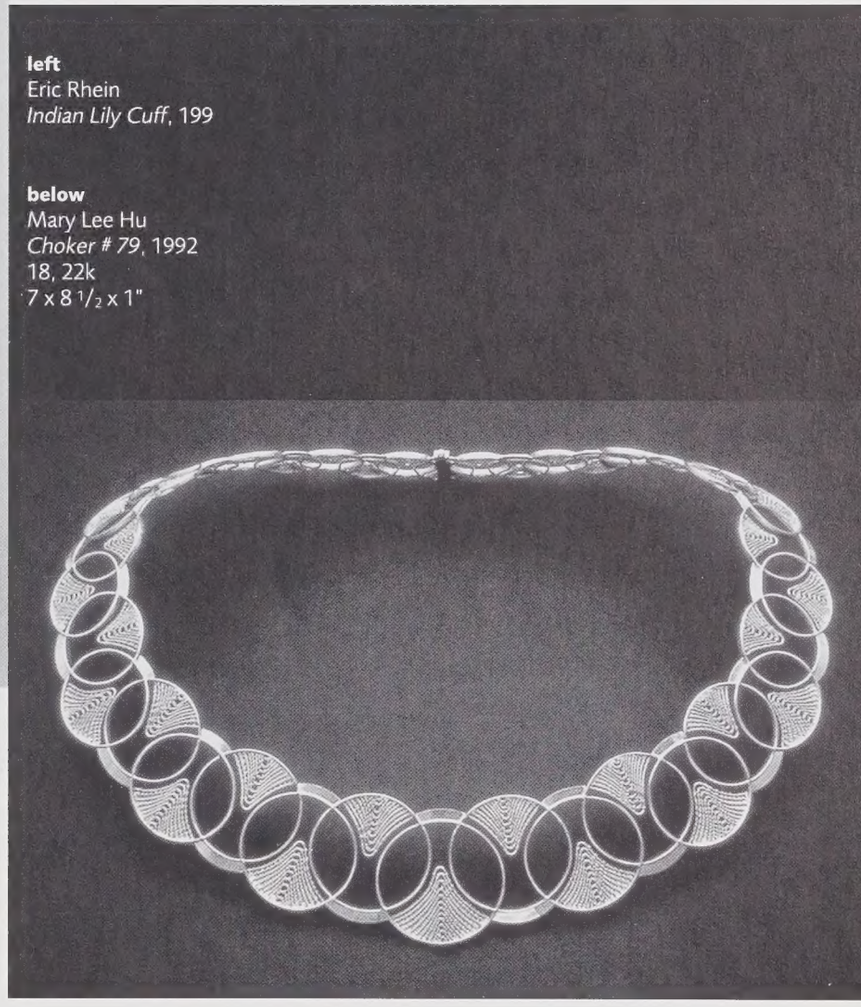
More poetic in its subtle and haunting references was Kiff Slemmons's *Butterfly's Turn*, a pair of earrings with box inspired by the opera *Madame Butterfly*. Slemmons used the bronze alloy called Merlin's gold to make a pair of earrings in the shape of Japanese alphabet characters. To display them she adorned a cigar box with images of kimonos and the American flag. In the opera the loyal and beautiful Madame Butterfly is betrayed by her husband, an American naval officer. The straight pins Slemmons used to affix tiny silver stars to the box may be the voodoo curse that any opera fan would be overjoyed to see befall the duplicitous American husband.



Laurie Hall's large necklace on *La Boheme*, Giacomo Puccini's popular opera about Parisian artists and poets, was straightforward. Hall used fabricated sterling silver and carved aluminum to build a playful neckpiece that includes a marquee for the opera and the audience's view of Puccini himself, in tails, conducting an orchestra.

Among the artists who made beautiful, though less specific pieces were Pat Flynn, whose gold, platinum, and iron brooch in the shape of a large railroad spike seemed to evoke Greek tragedy and opera; Myra Mimlitsch Gray's gorgeous abstract gold and pearl brooch *Bel Canto*; Mary Lee Hu's exquisite gold choker; Karen Gilbert's Victorian-inspired silver and onyx choker; Kent Raible's sublime gold and semi-precious stone necklace that evokes the dazzling beauty of an Indian princess's boudoir; Eric Rhein's opulent cuff of diaphanous fabrics; and Julie Anne Mihalisin's elegantly icy glass, silver and gold necklace.

Robin Updike is an arts writer who lives in Seattle, Washington.



left
Eric Rhein
Indian Lily Cuff, 199

below
Mary Lee Hu
Choker # 79, 1992
18, 22k
7 x $8^{1}/_{2}$ x 1"

"I would like people to dig up a piece of my jewelry 1,000 years from now and think it was a beautiful piece of work," says James Barker.

Lofty goals, some would say. But Barker's spectacular gold jewelry has a timeless beauty that combines designs of ancient cultures with his contemporary, artistic eye. He employs all hand tools to create his one-of-a-kind pieces, much the way artisans have fashioned jewelry through the centuries.

Originally a painter and sculptor who received his formal training at Milwaukee's Layton School of Art, Barker began his professional art career as a display and graphic designer. He had aspirations to open his own advertising agency and produce TV commercials as well as print ads, which lead him to become a photographer and cinematographer.

But in 1972, he chose to pursue jewelry making, which had been an interest since he was a Cub Scout making bracelets in craft class. His first work was in silver. But he soon discovered his designs were so labor intensive that he could not command a sufficient amount of money for work done in sterling silver and began to work in 18 and 22k gold.

Barker's work is an extraordinary compilation of his extensive knowledge of and interest in archaeology, the eye of a true painter, and a technological perfectionist. Like his machinist grandfather before him, Barker strives to make each piece better than the preceding one. "I'm always trying to stretch each idea to its utmost capacity," says Barker. "I'm never sure what a piece will ultimately end up looking like until it is completed. When I begin, it is like looking through a frosted glass at the idea. You can see the general outline, but it's too fuzzy to really see the detail. When I'm done, the window is crystal clear and you can see every tiny definition."

James Barker

J. Cotter Gallery
Vail, Colorado
November 27 - December 19, 1997

Beaver Creek, Colorado
December 20, 1997 - March 29, 1998

by Trish Kiesewetter

The placement of stones within Barker's jewelry is sometimes accidental, the chance discovery of a stone lying on his work table, or sometimes a continuous stream of trying one stone after another until the perfect combination is found, or other times looking at a tray of stones and simply visualizing what would work. 'The design of my jewelry is about balance, not symmetry," says Barker. " I want people's eyes to move up and down, back and forth, to always be moving on my pieces. Symmetry tends to make the eye move in specific directions. For instance, I want my brooches to be worn in any direction. That takes balance within the piece."

Whatever his personal goals, one thing is certain: Barker's jewelry is visually stunning and distinctive. It provides an elegance and uniqueness to anyone fortunate enough to own a piece.

Trish Kiesewetter is a writer who lives in Vail, Colorado. She is also the executive editor of the Arts and Entertainment sections of Eagle Summit Publishing.

top left
Medal Designed as an Award in Honor of the Creation of the Universe
18k, 22k, diamond, abalone, mabé pearl

bottom left
Untitled
18k, 20k, 22k, harlequin cut amythest, harlequin cut tourmaline, biwa pearl, freshwater pearl, diamond

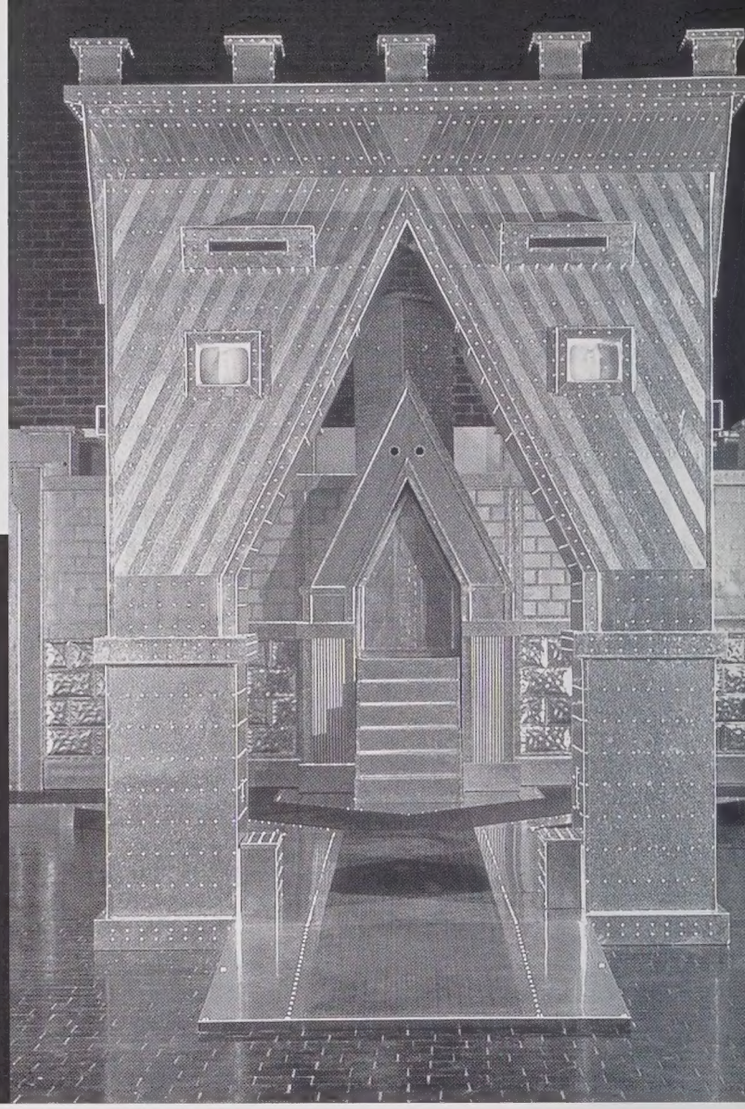
top right
Untitled
18k, 22k, 24k, diamond, amythest, pink tourmaline, freshwater pearl

bottom right
Untitled
watermelon tourmaline, indicolite tourmaline, biwa stick pearl

The Institution

Sarratt Gallery
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee
September 9 - 23, 1997

by Dorothy Joiner



Sheathed in unrelenting galvanized sheet metal over a wooden core, Michael Aurbach's interactive installation uses biting humor to characterize *The Institution* as defensive, phallo-dominant, and clandestine.

Watching themselves approach on closed circuit TV, visitors are greeted by twin message boards mounted on the mock triumphal arch-entry, as each of a dozen or so declarations rapidly dissolve into the next: "A committee is being formed to review the situation;" "The administration cannot be reached for comment."

Their passage under the arch noted by the unsettling sizzle of a motion detector, viewers then face a dwarfed fortress with crenellated roof line and miniature tower, a ribald metaphor for the "small" men who "run the show." Embossed to look like a closed zipper, the angular entrance continues to poke fun at patriarchy. The door is "zipped up" against disclosure, the pull at the top dangling limply. Two round holes above imitate the eyes of a KKK hood, underscoring the conjoined notions of the covert and the masculine.

Intrigued by openings on either side of the facade, the visitor bends over to draw aside black curtains only to confront his or her own backside projected on yet another TV monitor inside the claustrophobic cubicle. Message boards reinforce the suspicions of an unseen worker: "Identify team players"; "Free speech need not exist"; "Monitor all calls and party affiliation."

Further evidence of *The Institution*'s defensiveness derives from the numbers affixed to the back of the arch. Patterned after those in all-night stores, the digits 4, 5, and 6 guide an employee in estimating the height of a robber.

Reflecting light, as the organization deflects real human interaction, *The Institution*'s metal casing accepts various patterns. Myriad screws on the arch activate the surface, describing horizontal registers. Smooth bricks on the upper half of the structure and more rusticated stones below replicate the facade of an administrative building. In certain illumination, however, the normally light-spilling metal seems almost to dissolve, as though to imply that *The Institution* - its "topless towers" seemingly indestructible - is nothing more than a parietal cynicism, a hollow joke.

Dorothy Joiner is the Coordinator of International Programs at the State University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia.

above
Michael Aurbach
The Institution, 1997
mixed media
$10^1/_2$ x 20 x 28'

Enid Kaplan

Joanne Rapp Gallery/The Hand and the Spirit
Scottsdale Arizona
April 1 - 30, 1997

by Robert Lalonde

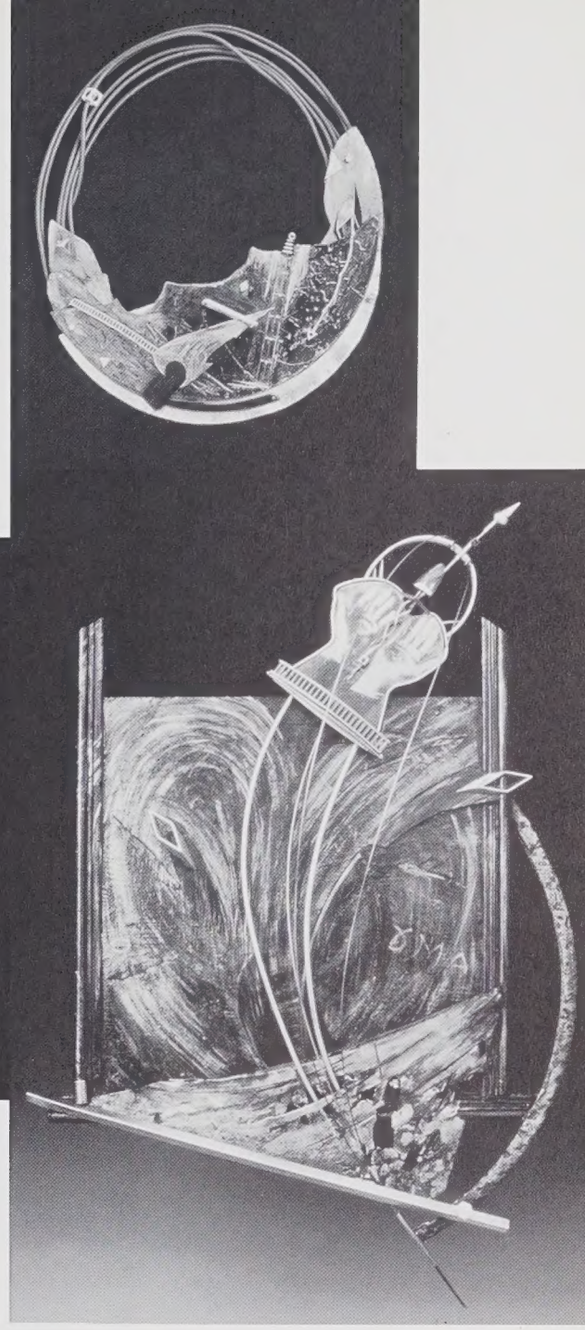
The recent exhibition of work by Enid Kaplan is a fascinating exploration of the artist's deeply personal evolution. Kaplan's effort, presented in almost story board fashion, portrays a reconciliation, if not a direct confrontation, with the worst and the best in life. Compounded with mythical reference and a hallucinatory aura, Kaplan's work opens a rare window into her psyche.

Kaplan's *Fragmentation* trilogy is by far the most transfixing statement within the exhibit. The works are individual examinations of what Kaplan describes as a "mythical heroic journey." The reliefs, which each embody a removable brooch, are stylized shrines with a dreamlike quality. The immediate allure is their explosive energy, fueled by brilliant reds, blues, and greens. The juxtaposition of line interwoven with familiar symbols articulate a sense of movement through time and space. They serve as Kaplan's outlet for sharing her life journey, through the use of a developed syntax of symbols and icons. This vocabulary, which includes triangles, faces, hands, seashells, precious stones, and ladders transposed against painterly surfaces, provides a mysterious narrative. Kaplan is in a way drawing a detailed spiritual map of her literal and mythical journey, in the same manner as the makers' pictographs and petroglyphs thousands of years ago.

Separation begins the journey with a female torso falling from a column. This call to adventure and break with normalcy is exaggerated by the nervous energy evoked by its expanding format. Swirling lines speak of indecision and an anticipated ascent into the unknown. The journey continues with *Initiation*, a spiritual confrontation with evil. Its brooch, a figure with hand rising upward and holding a white shell, rests on a boat-like form, suggesting the transitional portion of the trip, or as Kaplan puts it, " the challenge to recreate one's sense of self." *Return*, the last in the series, culminates with eyes in the palms of hands, balanced on a gold and silver DNA strand. In a sense, this is the resurrection: the heroin returns home to share her journey with the tribe.

For Kaplan, who has been profoundly effected by travels to places such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the elemental conceptual basis for her work appears to be two-fold. A deep rooted personal struggle to achieve spiritual power is accompanied by a calling to tell the story of that journey. By these means Kaplan plays the role of a modern day cave painter. In a statement, Kaplan speaks of the *Shaman* in relation to her own role as an artist in society: Kaplan has found herself assigned the task of surpassing the role of object maker. She has chosen instead to provide a spiritual link, as she says, "bridging two worlds . . . by making the invisible world visible."

Robert Lalonde is a graduate student in Jewelry and Metalsmithing at Arizona State University. He lives in Tempe, Arizona.



top
Astral Dream (neckpiece), 1997
metals, vinyl record, acrylic paint, mixed media
12 x 16 x 1"
Photograph by Paul Fournier

bottom
Wall Relief with brooch, 1997
14k, sterling, rutilated quartz, acrylic, wood, photograph
16 x 14 x 3"
Photograph by Paul Fournier

The Jewelry of Ken Cory: Play Disguised

Tacoma Art Museum

Tacoma, Washington

September 16 - November 30, 1997

(Curated by Nancy Worden With an accompanying book of the same title, with text by Ben Mitchell University of Washington Press)

by Dana Standish

Ken Cory died suddenly, in 1994, leaving behind a nearly-complete body of work that he had never found a reason to part with: an immaculately-kept house in Ellensburg, Washington, that was part home and part museum for his vast collections of arcane Americana; many stunned students, family, and colleagues in the metals world; and several very good friends. One of these friends, the metalsmith Nancy Worden, has made it her life's work over the past three years to bring to fruition this exhibition and accompanying book which honors and explains how the life and work of Ken Cory were so inextricably intertwined.

Cory was, by all accounts, somewhat of an odd duck. He was as meticulously demanding of his students and friends as he was of himself. His antic sense of humor was equaled only by the tenderness with which he viewed human and societal shortcomings. He was an orderly iconoclast who turned the twin beams of disdain and sarcasm on those things he loved the most - the American west, American car culture, male/female relationships, traditional Native American art - managing to poke fun at himself in the process. In a time when many metalsmiths were clamoring for recognition, trying to convince an indifferent world that metals was a fine art, Cory lived a hermit's life, emerging only for one of his famous cross-country road trips or one of his regular visits to local flea markets. He saw no need to pander to the dominant aesthetic, as he turned out jewelry that is unquestionably about line, form, volume, and, above all, ideas.

Cory's work went through several phases, all of which are exhaustively catalogued in the book that accompanies the exhibition. The book is not only an overview of Cory's life and work, but it includes interviews with his colleagues and friends, and a discussion of art historical trends as it attempts to place Cory within a cultural context. I myself have never spent thirty seconds chewing over whether someone owes a debt to the Beats or the Funks, and I doubt whether Cory gave the matter much thought; still, there are some people who like to have names for things, and the book makes a partly-successful attempt to find a niche for Cory (the verdict is: solidly on the Beat-Funk cusp). I prefer to let the work speak for itself, which it does quite eloquently. The book is, however, an amazing visual record of Cory's work, and as such is an invaluable addition to metals scholarship.

The show is organized roughly chronologically, and cases of Cory's work share the museum walls with examples of his collec-

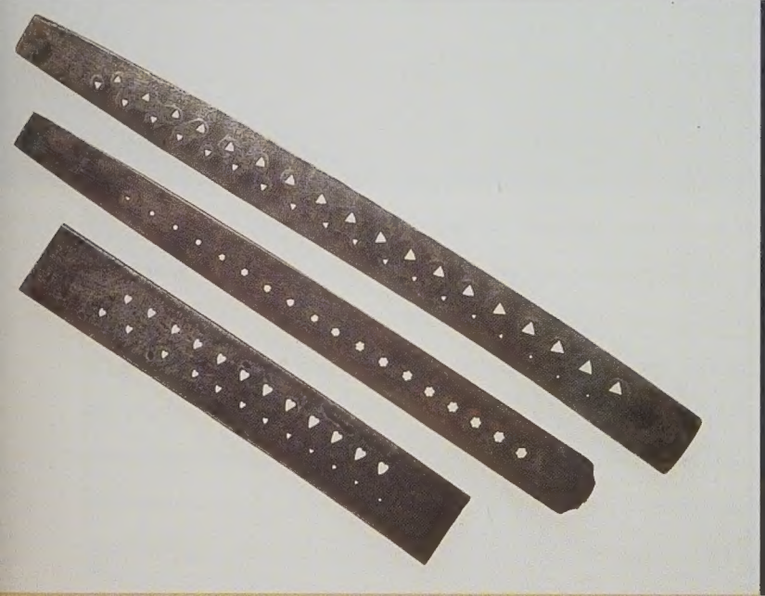
tions: cast bronze hose nozzles, miniature frying pans, beaded Native American bags, wooden game boards. Cory worked in series and he was drawn to images that appeared in series. The overall effect is one of orderliness and of Cory's desire to control his surroundings, both of which are so evident in his work.

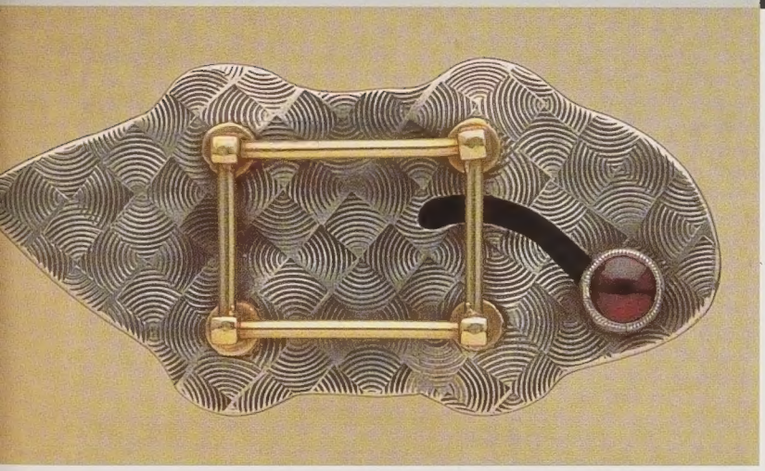
Cory's work went through an early phase, which consisted largely of explorations using cast copper and plastics, followed by a middle phase which included his collaboration, in the 1970s, with Leslie LePere. This friendship produced a series of graphic and frequently misogynistic enameled medallions that are probably as much an unfortunate sign of the times as they are a sign of emotional immaturity. The final group of his work is made up of gifts for family and friends, as well as a series of delicate, finely-crafted, and heart-breakingly tender pins that were to prove to be the culmination of everything Cory had been working towards for twenty-five years. These pins, which by all rights should have been the result of a mid-life reckoning, turned out to be instead the last works of Cory's life (he died at age fifty), and the liveliness and vigor of their lines is matched only by the sadness of their stately forms that seems to show that Cory had, finally, taken serious measure of life's frailty.

There is, for instance, *Boat*, 1987, a minute, highly-patterned pin. It is interesting to note that in Cory's sketchbook, he called this piece *Little Man in a Boat*, which goes a long way toward explaining the dejected, downward-turning path of a garnet that has slipped (or escaped), alone, from the safe confines of the boat's rigid framework. Perhaps this is a commentary on life's loneliness, or perhaps it is merely a harmonious accident of shape and pattern, but more likely it reflects Cory's rigorous self-examination and sexually suggestive sense of humor at the time. I believe that what makes these later works so poignant is that they are renderings, in metal, of the inconsistencies and foibles that Ken Cory, always the relentless observer of life outside himself, saw when he looked in the mirror near what - unknown to him - was to be the last days of his life.

I must confess that I was not a fan of Cory's work before I saw this exhibition. His works, previously, had always seemed to me to be so - well, so *small*. I now see that the source of my ignorance was that I had not seen his works together, as part of a continuum that encompassed and determined his life. To see the later pins as a body, to see the sketchbooks lined up, and the cases with his quirky and odd collections covering the walls of the museum, to see his well-worn workbench with its array of drawplates that he fashioned from truck springs is a gift that Nancy Worden and the Tacoma Art Museum have given to the metals community and the museum-going public.

As I was leaving the exhibition, an elderly woman ahead of me paused for a moment in front of the photograph of Cory on the museum wall. "He looks just like I thought he would look," she said to her companion. That was the true gift of this show: that those of us who saw it have a sense of the ways in which Ken Cory's art was so much a part of his life. And now that we have seen the show, he looks just like we thought he would.





opposite page
Handmade Design Stamps, 1977 - 1990
high carbon steel
largest: $3\frac{1}{2} \times 1$"; smallest $2\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{16}$"

left
Triangular Drawplate, 1978
high carbon steel
$14 \times 1\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{1}{4}$"

below
Boat (pin), 1987
silver, 18k, garnet
$1 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$

Dana Standish is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Seattle Washington.

Lynn Whitford: No Ideas But in Things

William Traver Gallery
Seattle, Washington
October 3 - November 2, 1997

by William Baran-Mickle

This show continues the threads of Whitford's investigation of the static arrangements of chemistry vessels from her 1994 solo show, *The Effects of Good Chemistry*. Those still life tableaux, vessels on shelves, were conceived as units as fully controlled as the frozen arrangements in a William Bailey pencil drawing. Whitford now seems willing to loosen control over her images, a gamble that enlivens the new work, allowing greater freedom of interpretation. This next generation, however, moves in two new directions, toward more dynamic forms and settings, and toward a deeper sense of chemistry. The arrangements are now arbitrary, mutable, and more relaxed.

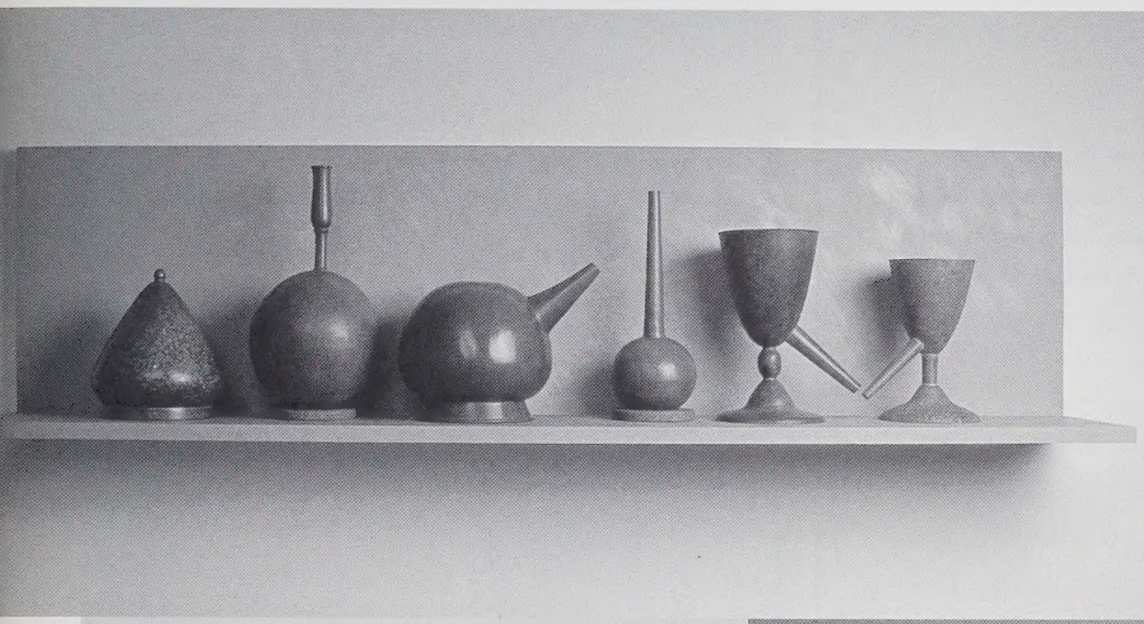
The Tools of Transformation series recreates objects used for alchemical research. They are the shapes that preceded our modern day chemistry glassware. The names of these forms *(Alembic, retort, cucurbit, and matrass)* are as interesting as their shapes (gourd, bulb, right-side and upside down, with long curved or straight spouts). Here they seem as animated characters in splendid clothing. Whitford has a wonderful finesse with patina. These luscious crusts of color disinherit the forms from their function and create a useful distance between the object and the viewer. This encourages viewers to focus on the life of the forms, and to question their ancient purposes in light of today's sophisticated technology.

Whitford also displays a continuing series that uses medicine cabinets. The *If Time Were an Object* series provides a surprisingly rich starting point for any number and directions of contemplation. Each full-size, old-fashioned, surface mounted cabinet has three shelves filled with small bottles, real (old and original) and facsimile. With their mirrored background, these are simple, sober, and darkly poetic sculptures. Whitford's surface treatments are secure.

While each of these sculptures has its own character, they share the inquiries of the *Tools for Transformation* series. How do medicines fit into our lives? Have we really changed at all from the days of magic and our search for wishful, perhaps impossible, results and solutions? We see in each an element of nostalgia, but we wonder about the depths of our desire to mediate our world through the medicine cabinet. The recessed mirror behind the shelves implicates viewers in the work.

Two works, *Nature Morta*, perhaps the beginning of a new series, perhaps simply experiments, were a departure from the others. Arranged on square platters were vegetables and fruit, beautifully rendered in pewter. These monochromatic constructions are strangely warm, a stark contrast from the cool patinas and stiffness of the vessel forms. An over animated base on one and the use of little tomatoes to enliven the other threaten to throw these works into confusion, especially in light of their titles. Still, the sculptures are beautiful and promising, though it is too early to know where such statements are headed.

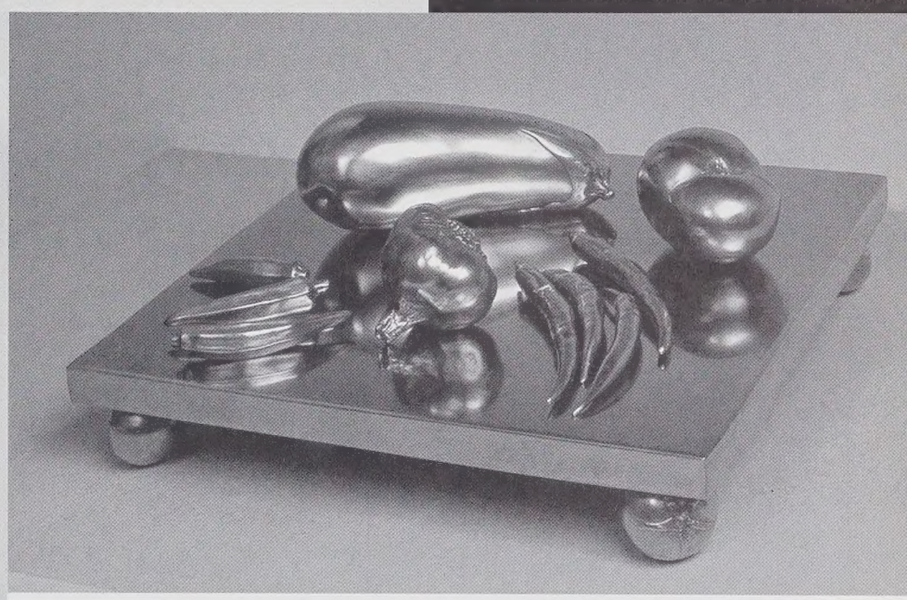
William Baran-Mickle is a writer and metalsmith who resides in Pittsford, New York.



top
Tools for Transformation II, 1997
copper, brass, wooden shelf
$15^1/_2 \times 58 \times 10^3/_4$"

left
If Time Were an Object (Milano), 1997
brass, copper, pewter, silver, glass, wooden cabinet
$24^3/_4 \times 20^3/_4 \times 5^1/_2$"

below
Natura Morta (Bhindi/Bharta), 1997
pewter
$4^3/_4 \times 11^1/_2 \times 11^1/_2$"



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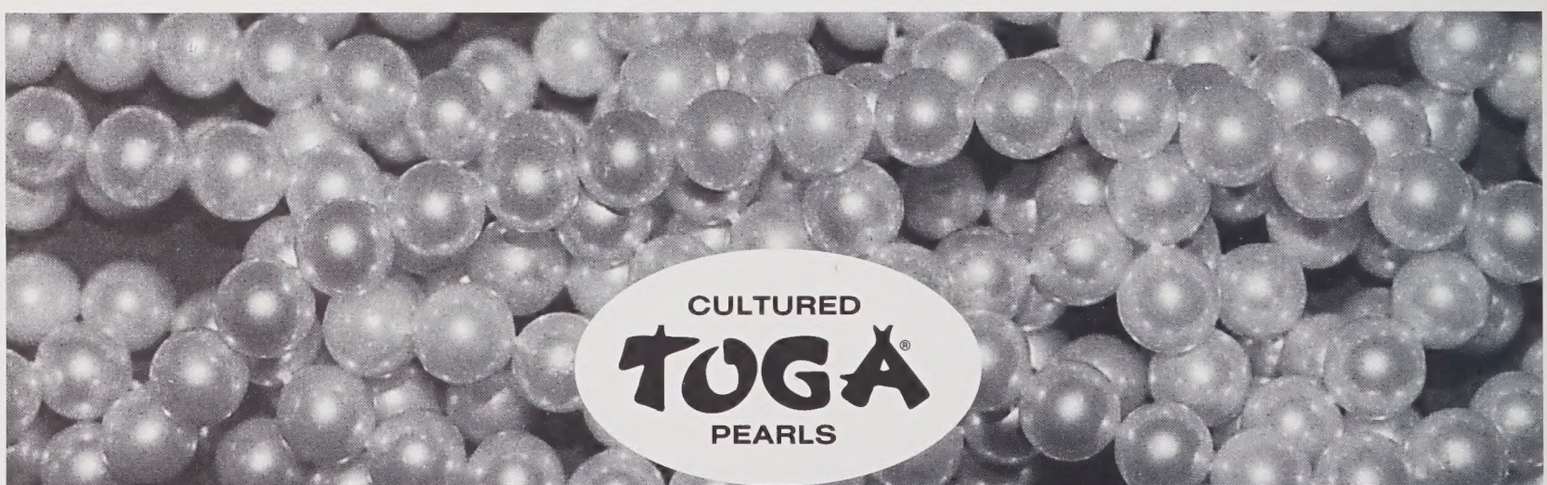

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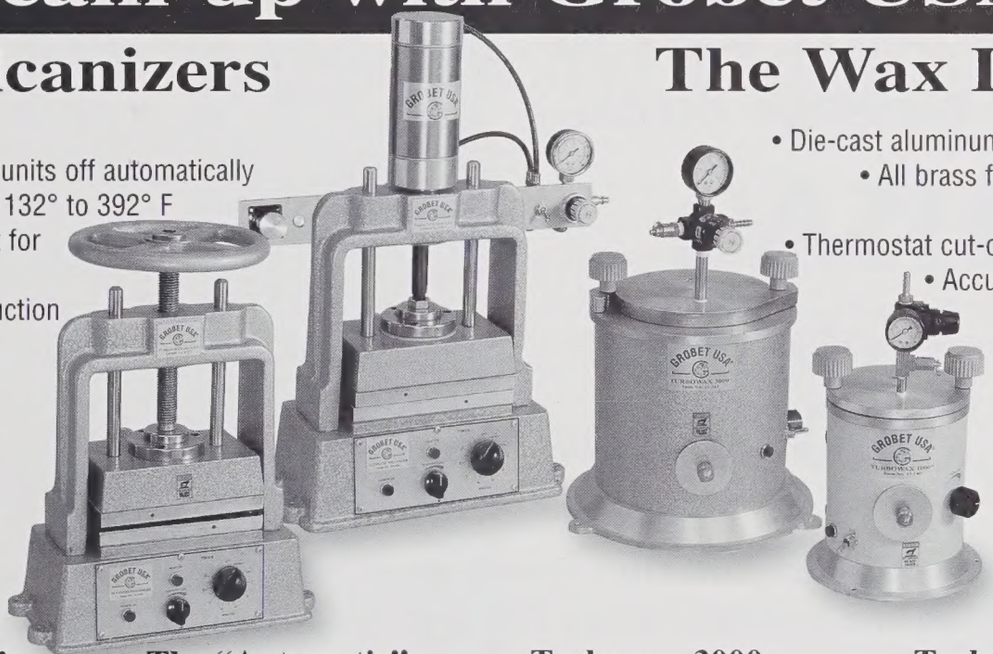

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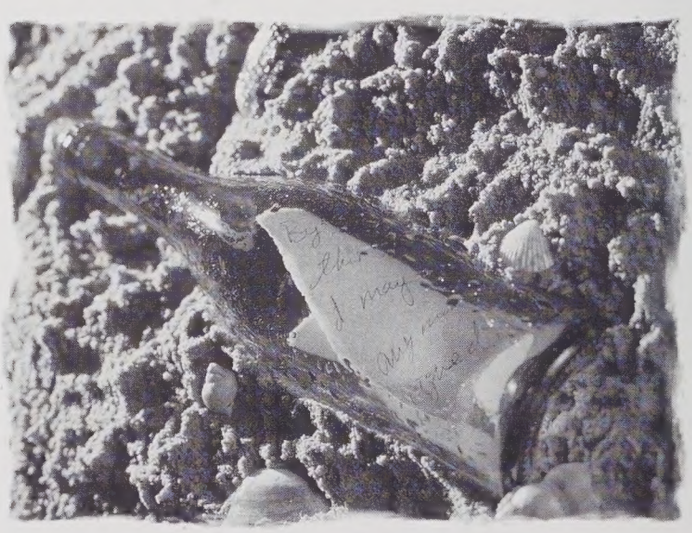

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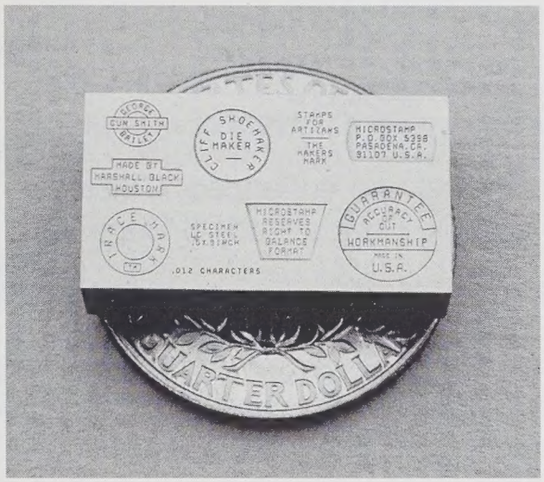

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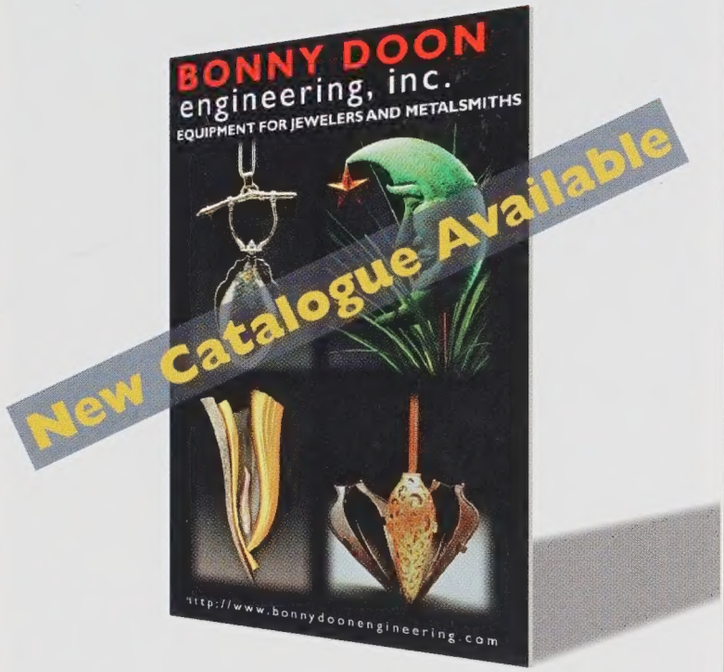

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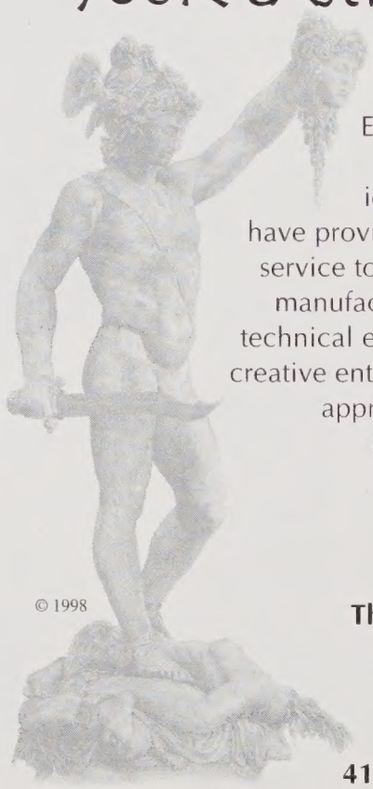

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Charles Crowley

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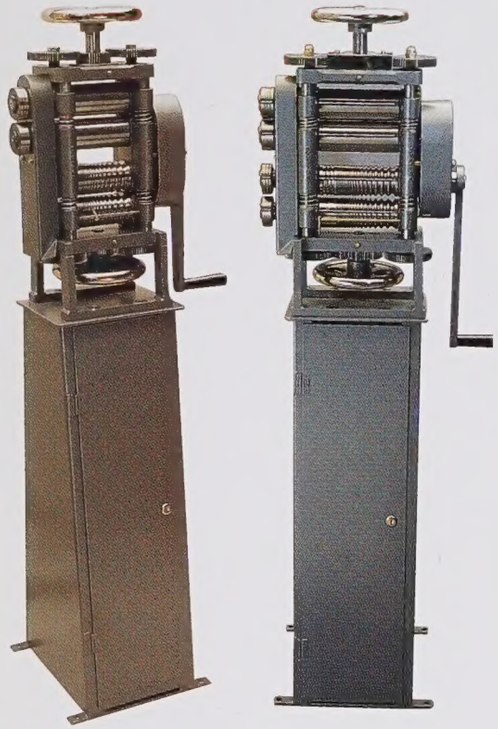

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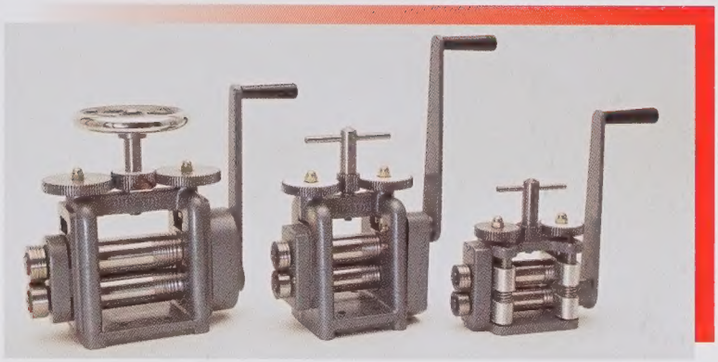

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